

UNITED STATES  
SPECIAL OPERATIONS  
COMMAND



# HISTORY



**15TH  
ANNIVERSARY**

# OUR PAST IS PROLOGUE

*16 April 2002*

On the occasion of the United States Special Operations Command's (USSOCOM's) 15th Anniversary, we should reflect on the tremendous strides that have been made in our nation's special operations capability since USSOCOM's establishment. The events of 11 September 2001 have altered how our nation views Special Operations Forces (SOF) and its importance to the defense of freedom. We are waging a new type of world war, one against transnational terrorists with global reach, and SOF play a crucial role in this fight. The political and military visionaries who foresaw the trends that made such a war inevitable created this command to ensure that the United States had a force trained, equipped, and ready to combat such adversaries and destroy them.

Since the establishment of USSOCOM, SOF have evolved into an essential element of our national military strategy. SOF are a potent enabling force in war and an essential tool for regional collective security initiatives during peace. Today, the theater commanders in chief (CINCs) rely upon their theater special operations commands (TSOCs) for rapid response to emergencies and to provide warrior-diplomats who pave the way for better U.S. relations with our foreign partners. Our unique capabilities provide CINCs and the Secretary of Defense with powerful tools that are found nowhere else.

The history depicted on the pages of this 15th Anniversary Edition illuminates SOF's versatility across the entire spectrum of military operations, from war to peace. Whether our forces are acting in support of conventional forces or conducting independent special operations, the SOF warrior has emerged as America's most relevant and effective force multiplier in the war against terrorism. Spirit, daring, courage, and the ability to operate in uncertain, hostile environments are all hallmarks of our special operations warriors. We should be proud of our past accomplishments and committed to being prepared to combat future threats. Our nation needs SOF now more than ever, and our forces are ready for the challenge!



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles R. Holland". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

General Charles R. Holland, USAF  
Commander in Chief  
United States Special Operations Command

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# FOUNDING AND EVOLUTION OF USSOCOM

## *Founding USSOCOM*

“I think we have an abort situation,” Defense Secretary Harold Brown informed President Jimmy Carter on 24 April 1980. Carter simply responded, “Let’s go with his [the ground commander’s] recommendation.” The mission to rescue 53 American hostages had failed. At a desolate site in Iran known as “Desert One,” tragedy occurred minutes later when two aircraft collided on the ground and eight men died. The failed mission struck a blow to American prestige and further eroded the public’s confidence in the U.S. government.

The event culminated a period of Special Operations Forces (SOF) decline in the 1970s. SOF capabilities had deteriorated throughout the post-Vietnam era, a time marked by considerable distrust between SOF and the conventional military and by significant funding cuts for special operations. The Desert One disaster, however, led the Defense Department to appoint an investigative panel, chaired by the former Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral James L. Holloway. The Holloway Commission’s findings caused the Defense Department to create a counterterrorist joint task force and the Special Operations Advisory Panel.

Desert One did serve to strengthen the resolve of some within the Department of Defense to reform SOF. Army Chief of Staff General Edward C. “Shy” Meyer called for a further restructuring of special operations capabilities. Although unsuccessful at the joint level, Meyer nevertheless went on to consolidate Army SOF units under the new 1st Special Operations Command in 1982, a significant step to improve Army SOF.

By 1983, there was a small but growing sense in Congress of the need for military reforms. In June, the Senate Armed Services Committee (SASC), under the chairmanship of Senator Barry Goldwater (R-AZ), began a two-year-long study of the Defense Department



Desert One, Iran, April 1980  
Wreckage of a C-130 where eight Americans died.

which included an examination of SOF. Two events in October 1983 further demonstrated the need for change: the terrorist bombing attack in Lebanon and the invasion of Grenada. The loss of 237 Marines to terrorism, combined with the command and control problems that occurred during the Grenada invasion, refocused Congressional attention on the growing threat of low-intensity conflict and on the issue of joint interoperability.

With concern mounting on Capitol Hill, the Department of Defense created the Joint Special Operations Agency on 1 January 1984; this agency, however, had neither operational nor command authority over any SOF. The Joint Special Operations Agency thus did little to improve SOF readiness, capabilities, or policies—hardly what Congress had in mind as a systemic fix for SOF’s problems. Within the Defense Department, there were a few staunch SOF supporters. Noel Koch, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, and his deputy, Lynn Rylander, both advocated SOF reforms.

At the same time, a few visionaries on Capitol Hill were determined to overhaul SOF. They included Senators Sam Nunn (D-GA) and William Cohen (R-ME), both members of the Armed Services Committee, and Representative Dan Daniel (D-VA), the



Senator Sam Nunn  
(D-GA)



Senator William Cohen  
(R-ME)



Rep. Dan Daniel  
(D-VA)

chairman of the Readiness Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee. Congressman Daniel had become convinced that the U.S. military establishment was not interested in special operations, that the country's capability in this area was second rate, and that SOF operational command and control was an endemic problem. Senators Nunn and Cohen also felt strongly that the Department of Defense was not preparing adequately for future threats. Senator Nunn expressed a growing frustration with the Services' practice of reallocating monies appropriated for SOF modernization to non-SOF programs. Senator Cohen agreed that the U.S. needed a clearer organizational focus and chain of command for special operations to deal with low-intensity conflicts.

In October 1985, the Senate Armed Services Committee published the results of its two-year review of the U.S. military structure, entitled "Defense Organization: The Need For Change." Mr. James R. Locher III, the principal author of this study, also examined past special operations and speculated on the most likely future threats. This influential document led to the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act of 1986.

By spring 1986, SOF advocates had introduced reform bills in both houses of Congress. On 15 May, Senator Cohen introduced the Senate bill, co-sponsored by Senator Nunn and others, which called for a joint military organization for SOF and the establishment of an office in the Defense Department to ensure adequate funding and policy emphasis for low-intensity conflict and special operations. Representative Daniel's proposal went even further—he wanted a national special operations agency headed by a civilian who would bypass the Joint Chiefs and report directly to the Secretary of Defense; this would keep Joint Chiefs and the Services out of the SOF budget process.

Congress held hearings on the two bills in the summer of 1986. Admiral William J. Crowe, Jr., Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, led the Pentagon's opposition to the bills. He proposed, as an alternative, a new special operations forces command led by a three-star general. This proposal was not well received on Capitol Hill—Congress wanted a four-star general in charge to give SOF more clout. A number of retired military officers and others testified in favor of the need for reform.

By most accounts, retired Army Major General Richard Scholtes gave the most compelling reasons for change. Scholtes, who commanded the joint special operations task force in Grenada, explained how conventional force leaders misused SOF during the operation, not allowing them to use their unique capabilities, which resulted in high SOF casualties. After his formal testimony, Scholtes met privately with a small number of Senators to elaborate on the problems that he had encountered in Grenada.

Both the House and Senate passed SOF reform bills, and these went to a conference committee for reconciliation. Senate and House conferees forged a compromise. The bill called for a unified combatant command headed by a four-star general for all SOF, an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict [ASD (SO/LIC)], a coordinating board for low-intensity conflict within the National Security Council, and a new Major Force Program (MFP 11) for SOF (the so-called "SOF checkbook"). The House had conceded on the issue of a new civilian-led agency, but insisted on including MFP 11 to protect SOF funding. The final bill, attached as a rider to the 1987 Defense Authorization Act, amended the Goldwater-Nichols Act and was signed into law in October 1986.

For the first time, Congress had mandated that the President create a unified combatant command. Congress clearly intended to force the Department of Defense and the

Administration to face up to the realities of past failures and emerging threats. The Department of Defense and the Administration were responsible for implementing the law, and Congress subsequently had to pass two additional bills to ensure proper implementation.

The legislation promised to improve SOF in several respects. Once implemented, MFP-11 provided SOF with control over its own resources, better enabling it to modernize the force. Additionally, the law fostered interservice cooperation: a single commander for all SOF promoted interoperability among the forces assigned to the same command. The establishment of a four-star commander in chief and an Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict eventually gave SOF a voice in the highest councils of the Defense Department.

Implementing the provisions and mandates of the Nunn-Cohen Act, however, was neither rapid nor smooth. One of the first issues to surface was appointing an ASD (SO/LIC), whose principal duties included monitorship of special operations activities and low-intensity conflict activities of the Department of Defense. The Congress even increased the number of assistant secretaries of defense from eleven to twelve, but the Department of Defense still did not fill this new billet. In December 1987, the Congress directed Secretary of the Army John O. Marsh to carry out the ASD (SO/LIC) duties until a suitable replacement was approved by the Senate. Not until 18 months after the legislation passed did Ambassador Charles Whitehouse assume the duties of ASD (SO/LIC).

Meanwhile, the establishment of USSOCOM provided its own measure of excitement. A quick solution to manning and basing a brand new unified command was to abolish an existing command. United States Readiness Command (USREDCOM), with an often misunderstood mission, did not appear to have a viable mission in the post Goldwater-





Nichols era. And its Commander in Chief, General James Lindsay, had had some special operations experience. On 23 January 1987, the Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended

to the Secretary of Defense that USREDCOM be disestablished to provide billets and facilities for USSOCOM.

President Ronald Reagan approved the establishment of the new command on 13 April 1987. The Department of Defense activated USSOCOM on 16 April 1987 and nominated General Lindsay to be the first Commander in Chief (USCINCSOC). The Senate accepted him without debate.

USSOCOM had its activation ceremony on 1 June 1987. Guest speakers included William H. Taft IV, Deputy Secretary of Defense, and Admiral William J. Crowe, Jr., two men who had opposed the Nunn-Cohen amendment. Admiral Crowe's speech at the ceremony advised General Lindsay to integrate the new command into the mainstream military: "First, break down the wall that has more or less come between special operations forces and the other parts of our military, the wall that some people will try to build higher. Second, educate the rest of the military—spread a recognition and understanding of what you do, why you do it, and how important it is that you do it. Last, integrate your efforts into the full spectrum of our military capabilities." Putting this advice into action, General Lindsay knew, would pose significant challenges (a "sporty" course, he called it), considering the opposition the Defense Department had shown.



## ***USSOCOM Commanders***

There have been six CINCSOCs since 1987—Generals James J. Lindsay (16 April 1987-27 June 1990), Carl W. Stiner (27 June 1990-20 May 1993), Wayne A. Downing (20 May 1993-29 February 1996), Henry H. Shelton (29 February 1996-25 September 1997) Peter J. Schoomaker (5 November 1997-27 October 2000) and Charles R. Holland (27 October 2000 to the present). Each CINCSOC faced unique challenges and opportunities, and each left his mark on the SOF community in the course of responding to significant changes on the military landscape. But, one constant throughout this period has been change and new challenges for the U.S. military. The demise of the Soviet Union, the downsizing of the U.S. military, the appearance of new aggressor states, heightened regional instabilities, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and transnational terrorism, all led to an increased use of SOF by the conventional U.S. military, Ambassadors, and other government agencies.



General James J. Lindsay  
USCINCSOC 1987-1990

The greatest challenge facing General Lindsay was to make the command the driving force behind SOF revitalization that Congress mandated without alienating conventional military leaders. This was no mean feat, given the opposition to the command's mere existence in many military circles. As the first CINCSOC, he developed a hierarchy of priorities to get the command functioning: organize, staff, train, and equip the headquarters; establish the relationships necessary to discharge its roles and missions; create Major Force Program 11 (MFP-11) to ensure SOF controlled its financial destiny; build command and control relationships with the components, ASD (SO/LIC), and the theater special operations commands (TSOCs); define worldwide SOF requirements; and plot the future of the command.

General Lindsay also faced two major operational tests—Operation EARNEST WILL/PRIME CHANCE I in the Persian Gulf, and Operations JUST CAUSE/PROMOTE LIBERTY in Panama. The use of SOF by the theater CINCs (known as the operational tempo, or OPTEMPO) increased significantly during General Lindsay's tenure.

The complex, politically sensitive process of establishing a new unified command extended into General Stiner's tenure as second CINCSOC. General Stiner also pushed the command to fulfill the provisions of the Nunn-Cohen Amendment. Perhaps most important, General Stiner oversaw the implementation of developing and acquiring "special operations peculiar" equipment, material, supplies, and services. After DESERT STORM, General Stiner devoted much of his time to raising public awareness about SOF's successes. Supporting the theater CINCs and maintaining SOF combat readiness were also top priorities. During his tenure, the command submitted fully-supported budgets based on SOF mission requirements. General Stiner also succeeded in convincing the Secretary of Defense to designate Psychological Operations (PSYOP) and Civil Affairs (CA) as SOF. During Stiner's tenure USSOCOM supported a number of operations worldwide, most notably DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM, PROVIDE COMFORT, PROVIDE RELIEF, and RESTORE HOPE. And, SOF OPTEMPO rose 35 percent.



General Carl W. Stiner  
USCINCSOC 1990-1993



General Wayne A. Downing  
USCINCSOC 1993-1996





General Henry H. Shelton  
USCINCSOC 1996-1997

On 20 May 1993, General Wayne A. Downing became the third CINCSOC. He brought unique qualifications to the position, having been a past director of the USSOCOM Washington Office and past commander of both the Joint Special Operations Command and the United States Army Special Operations Command. The main challenges of his tenure were to continue the revitalization of SOF and to prepare the SOF community for the 21st century. To these ends, General Downing streamlined the acquisition of SOF-specific equipment, increased the command's focus on its "customers," and realigned SOF budget requirements with the reduced Defense Department budgets.

He instituted changes in how resources were allocated for the future that resulted in a Strategic Planning Process which promised to put the command's budget to best use. During his watch the SOF OPTEMPO again increased. SOF participated in Operation UNOSOM II (Somalia), SUPPORT and UPHOLD DEMOCRACY (Haiti), and JOINT ENDEAVOR (Bosnia-Herzegovina), as well as many smaller contingencies and deployments. During his 21 months as CINCSOC, General Henry H. Shelton successfully guided the command through a



General Peter J. Schoomaker  
USCINCSOC 1997-2000

time of extraordinary worldwide demand for SOF support, and a time of constrained resources. From 1992- 1997, the USSOCOM budget shrank by more than 6 percent in constant 1997 dollars. At the same time, the number of SOF operations (OPTEMPO) increased by more than 51 percent and personnel deployments (PERSTEMPO) increased 127 percent. In 1996 alone, SOF deployed to a total of 142 countries, and engaged in 120 counterdrug missions, 12 demining training missions, and 204 Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) exercises, among other activities.

Under General Shelton, SOF's largest operational commitment was to Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR/JOINT GUARD, the peacekeeping mission in Bosnia. In addition, special operators assisted in noncombatant evacuations from such crisis areas as Liberia (Operation ASSURED RESPONSE), Sierra Leone (Operation NOBLE OBELISK), and Albania (Operation SILVER WAKE). As a way to improve the deployment process, the command developed "force module packages" which pre-configured what forces and operating supplies would be needed for a variety of missions, cutting back on preparation time while still offering the correct force mix.

Due to intense mission taskings, several SOF personnel specialties were labeled “high demand/low density assets.” Concerned about the impact on its people, the command carefully reviewed requests for these personnel and tracked their rate of deployment to prevent overuse.

On 5 November 1997, General Peter J. Schoomaker assumed command of USSOCOM, and like General Downing before, he brought a wealth of experience in special operations. In addition to commanding SOF tactical units, he served as commander of both the Joint Special Operations Command and United States Army Special Operations Command. Like his predecessors, he faced unique challenges as the command prepared for the 21st Century.

General Schoomaker’s top priority was to prepare the SOF community for change—change in order to remain relevant to national security requirements. To that end, he initiated or accelerated numerous projects, to include the headquarters reorganization; planning, programming and acquisition enhancements; and integrating the components into one resourcing and acquisition team. During his tenure, SOF participated in the transition from JOINT GUARD to JOINT FORGE in Bosnia-Herzegovina, DESERT THUNDER in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia (to thwart Saddam Hussein’s attempt to restrict UN inspectors’ freedom of movement), and numerous contingencies and peacetime engagements. SOF also played crucial roles in ALLIED FORCE, the operation that forced Serbian forces out of Kosovo, and JOINT GUARDIAN, which enforced the Kosovo peace agreement.

General Holland, who assumed command on 27 October 2000, emphasized that SOF had to address those seams and friction points that caused operational difficulties, primarily with the conventional forces. For example, he instructed AFSOC to continue working with the conventional AF to resolve differences observed during ALLIED FORCE, the Air

War Over Serbia. During ENDURING FREEDOM, CINCSOC noted that the war against terror also drove home the message that USSOCOM needed to build bridges with conventional forces to ease the demand being placed on SOF capabilities. He wanted the command to fix manpower and equipment deficiencies, and then add to the future force structure. ENDURING FREEDOM demonstrated that more PSYOP and CA forces needed to be in the active component. The war against terrorism led the command to create a joint interagency collaboration center, to create a counter-terrorism (CT) campaign support group, and to participate in the CT missions of the other unified commands.

### ***Evolution of the Command***

#### **Mission and Organization**

USSOCOM’s mission, as delineated in the 1987 JCS Manual 71-87, was to prepare SOF to carry out assigned missions and, if directed by the President or the Secretary of Defense, to plan for and conduct special operations. Mission responsibilities were:

- Develop SOF doctrine, tactics, techniques and procedures.
- Conduct specialized courses of instruction for all SOF.
- Train assigned forces and ensure interoperability of equipment and forces.
- Monitor the preparedness of SOF assigned to other unified commands.
- Monitor the promotions, assignments, retention, training and professional development of all SOF personnel.
- Consolidate and submit program and budget proposals for Major Force Program 11 (MFP-11).
- Develop and acquire special operations-peculiar equipment, material, supplies, and services.

General Lindsay organized the command along the lines of a typical unified command “J directorate” structure, with two modifications: he assigned MFP-11 and acquisition responsibilities to the J-8 (Resources) directorate, and created a new J-9 directorate, responsible for PSYOP and CA support, on 15 June 1988.

*“Prepare SOF to successfully conduct worldwide special operations, civil affairs, and psychological operations in peace and war in support of the regional combatant commanders, American ambassadors and their country teams, and other government agencies.”*

General Shelton continued to refine the command's mission statement, goals, and vision in order to serve SOF's customers more effectively. In December 1996, he approved a slightly revised mission statement:

*“Provide Special Operations Forces to the National Command Authorities, regional Combatant Commanders, and American Ambassadors and their country teams for successful conduct of worldwide special operations, civil affairs, and psychological operations during peace and war.”*



After General Shelton became the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on 1 October 1997, the new CINCSOC, General Schoomaker, elected to retain this mission statement. He did, however, articulate a new vision for USSOCOM:

*“Be the most capable and relevant Special Operations Forces in existence—living personal and professional standards of excellence to which all others aspire.”*

Integrity was his watchword and the command’s as well.

Though the command’s mission statement remained constant, the same could not be said for how General Schoomaker viewed the headquarters’ organization. His predecessor had initiated a review of the organization in hopes of aligning similar functions, streamlining procedures, and redirecting human resources. As a former component commander, General Schoomaker perceived that the headquarters did not adequately focus on the command’s critical functions, which he defined as resourcing SOF. He, therefore, boldly scrapped the traditional J-staff alignment and incorporated like or complementary functions into five “centers of excellence.” A general officer, flag officer, or senior executive service civilian led each center. The reorganization enabled CINCSOC to concentrate on strategic and operational priorities.

The Operations, Plans, and Policy Center (SOOP) combined functions from the J3 and J5 directorates. Merging combat simulations and requirements (J7) with programming and comptroller functions (J8) resulted in the Center for Force Structure, Requirements, Resources, and Strategic Assessments (SORR). The Intelligence and Information Operations Center (SOIO) included command, control, communications, computers and information systems (J6); the intelligence directorate (J2); and information operations (J3). The Acquisition Center (AC) and logistics directorate (J4) formed the Center of

Acquisition and Logistics (SOAL). Finally, the Command Support Center (SOCS) included the personnel directorate (J1) and the special staff offices. This headquarters reorganization promised to strengthen the resourcing functions of USSOCOM—and, ultimately, support to SOF, the theater CINCs, and American ambassadors.

In September 1999, General Schoomaker directed the headquarters to continue its transformation by further integrating staff functions. The Centers reevaluated how their existing procedures supported the command’s core Title 10 responsibilities of equipping, training, and sustaining SOF. The review led the headquarters to transfer its Material Requirements Division from SORR to SOOP, aligning it with the validation function. SORR established an Experimentation and a Joint Processes divisions. The Experimentation Division coordinated the testing of new warfighting concepts within USSOCOM and inserted SOF scenarios into Joint Forces Command exercises. The Processes Division served as the clearinghouse for USSOCOM submissions on issues discussed within Joint Staff forums, such as the Quadrennial Defense Review and the Joint Resources Oversight Council. SOIO began consolidating its functions in 1998 and continued restructuring in 2000 and 2001, all the while retaining its core missions of Intelligence, Information Operations, and C4I. In 1998, it merged the communications and computer support staffs from the former J2, J3, and J6 directorates to form a single C4I infrastructure support team. Also in 1998, SOAL became the sole program manager for C4I system acquisitions, with SOIO providing technical support. By January 2001, the center had completed its evolution from a J-staff structure, with a Chief Information Officer (CIO) coordinating information technology and a Senior Intelligence Officer (SIO) managing the

command's intelligence and information security programs. USSOCOM led the DOD in developing tests and exercises to ensure no Y2K problems interfered with SOF weapons systems.

Streamlining operations allowed the headquarters to transfer 27 of its personnel billets to the theater SOCs and provided a core staff for another new initiative, the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU). JSOU's mission was to educate future leaders in the art of joint special operations. In establishing JSOU, General Schoomaker noted that the school would leverage and enhance existing joint and Service professional military education (PME) programs. Accordingly, JSOU assumed operational control of the U.S. Air Force Special Operations School and Naval Postgraduate School resident special operations curricula, and also provided educational material to SOF faculty members at PME institutions.

During General Holland's tenure the mission statement changed to:

*“Provide special operations forces to the Secretary of Defense, regional Combatant Commanders, and American Ambassadors and their country teams for successful conduct of worldwide special operations, civil affairs, and psychological operations during both peace and war.”*

## **USSOCOM Forces**

The activation of USSOCOM required the assignment of components and forces, a task not without controversy. The law establishing USSOCOM said, “Unless otherwise directed by the Secretary of Defense, all active and reserve special operations forces of all armed forces stationed in the United States shall be assigned to the Special Operations Command.” Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger initially assigned USSOCOM three component commands and most of their forces. He assigned USSOCOM the 23rd Air Force, located at Hurlburt Field, Florida; the Naval Special Warfare Command, headquartered at NAB Coronado, San Diego, California; and the Army's 1st SOCOM, at Ft Bragg, North Carolina. Weinberger assigned the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) on 14 August 1987, after USSOCOM had become operational. Later, JSOC became a subunified command of USSOCOM.

At the time of its assignment, 1st SOCOM had charge of all the US Army's special operations units. Its mission was to prepare, provide, and sustain Army SOF to conduct foreign internal defense, unconventional warfare, special intelligence, psychological operations, strike operations, and related special operations. The 1st SOCOM forces included: the 1st, 5th, 7th and 10th Special Forces Groups (Airborne); 4th Psychological



SEAL during submarine training.

Operations Group; 96th Civil Affairs; 75th Ranger Regiment; 160th Special Operations Aviation Group (Airborne); numerous Reserve and National Guard units; and the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School.

Not all of these units, however, were immediately transferred to USSOCOM. Secretary Weinberger withheld the Active Duty and Reserve Psychological Operations (PSYOP) and Civil Affairs (CA) units, pending a special review. Earlier in 1987, the Office of the Secretary of Defense had proposed creating a separate sub-unified command for PSYOP and CA forces. Like other SOF units, PSYOP and CA had suffered severe cutbacks during the 1970s and 1980s, and some proponents feared that they would not fare much better under USSOCOM. General Lindsay opposed the plan, arguing that the command could use its authority to safeguard these SOF assets, and Admiral Crowe, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, agreed with him. On 15 October 1987, Secretary Weinberger assigned all Army and Air Force Active and Reserve Component PSYOP and CA units to USSOCOM.

Secretary Weinberger's actions, however, did not settle the PSYOP and CA issue completely. During General Stiner's tenure, another long-standing issue in assignment of PSYOP and CA was addressed. Reserve and National Guard leaders argued that these forces were assigned to USSOCOM only in wartime, upon mobilization. General Stiner pushed through an initiative that the Secretary of Defense approved in March 1993, designating PSYOP and CA as SOF. This decision enabled USSOCOM to command and control these units in peacetime as well, which greatly improved the command's ability to fund, train, equip, and organize these forces.

Created by the Navy on 16 April 1987, the Naval Special Warfare Command only had the Naval Special Warfare Center (the training command) assigned to it. Naval Special Warfare Groups I and II (and their SEALs and

Special Boat Units) were not assigned because the Navy argued that these organizations and their forces belonged to the Pacific and Atlantic fleets, respectively, and, therefore, not available for assignment to USSOCOM. Secretary of the Navy James Webb and Navy leadership felt the assignment of the special warfare assets to USSOCOM would detract from their close relationship with the fleets.

General Lindsay maintained that the special warfare forces rightfully belonged to USSOCOM since they were based in the United States. He reasoned that the Groups' relationships to the fleets were no different than a Special Forces Group's assignment to a particular theater, and he wanted to integrate Naval Special Warfare units with other SOF. On 23 October 1987, Secretary Weinberger ruled in favor of USSOCOM. Accordingly, operational control of the SEALs, Special Boat Units, and Naval Special Warfare Groups passed to the Naval Special Warfare Command on 1 March 1988, and that command assumed administrative control for these units on 1 October 1988.

The 23rd Air Force was a unique organization with two separate but interrelated missions: it was both a numbered air force assigned to the Military Airlift Command (MAC), and as USSOCOM's Air Force component, it supported SOF from all the Services. Secretary Weinberger assigned only the 23rd's special operations functions and units to USSOCOM, including its Reserve and National Guard units and the Air Force Special Operations School. MAC retained oversight responsibility for the 23rd's other mission areas (such as aeromedical airlift, rescue and weather reconnaissance, and operational support airlift missions). Since General Lindsay expected all components to be major command equivalents, this arrangement created problems.

From the outset, USSOCOM had wanted the 23rd "purified" of its non-SOF elements. MAC went along with this request. General



Lindsay's paramount concern remained—he still had to coordinate with MAC to effect changes at the 23rd. The current organizational arrangement thwarted his efforts to build the command that Congress had mandated. The solution, he decided, was to elevate the 23rd to a major air command. General Larry Welsh, the Air Force Chief of Staff, agreed and on 22 May 1990, redesignated the 23rd AF as the Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC).

### Budget and POM Development

The creation of MFP-11 was an important priority for both General Lindsay and Congress. Although the Nunn-Cohen Amendment had created MFP-11 to reform SOF funding, the wording of the law permitted varying interpretations, and some Defense Department officials argued that the new command should not submit its own Program Objective Memorandum (POM). General Lindsay and Ambassador Whitehouse, the ASD (SO/LIC), argued just the opposite and worked extremely hard to win approval of a POM and budget for the command.

This debate lingered until September 1988, when Senators Nunn and Cohen clarified Congressional intent, saying that the sponsors of the law “fully intended that the commander of the Special Operations Command would have sole responsibility for the preparation of the POM.” Congress enacted Public Law 100-456 that same month, which directed USCINCSOC to submit a POM directly to the Secretary of Defense.

On 24 January 1989, the Assistant Secretary of Defense, William H. Taft IV, signed a memorandum giving USCINCSOC budgetary authority over MFP-11. Soon afterwards, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) gave USSOCOM control of selected MFP-11 programs effective 1 October 1990 and total MFP-11 responsibility in October 1991. For the first time, a CINC was granted authority for a budget and POM.

The command needed to create a new Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS) process to structure a POM and budget for all SOF. Even with a Congressional mandate, the command found it difficult to establish MFP-11. Because of a staff shortfall, the command took a measured approach to assuming these tasks. The POM was the first step, with the initial one completed and submitted in 1988 through the Department of the Air Force. Based on Secretary Taft's directive, the command assumed budget execution authority by October 1990. In 1991 the command began to submit fully-supported POMs: this was the first time USSOCOM researched SOF mission requirements and developed the analysis for the POM justification instead of “crosswalking” requirements which the individual Services had developed in previous years. The establishment of MFP-11 set up a more focused resource process and ensured a balanced review of special operations requirements and programs.

General Downing directed the creation of the Strategic Planning Process to allocate the command's resources in the most effective ways. This prioritization and allocation process continued. General Schoomaker made significant changes in how the command allocated its resources by ending the competition for scarce dollars and melding the headquarters and components into one team. This meant that the priorities decided upon by CINCSOC and his component commanders (the so-called Board of Directors or “BOD”) would be executed without changes being made by subordinate commands. Second, charged by the CINC to ensure “fidelity” in the resourcing process, the Center for Force Structure, Requirements, Resources, and Strategic Assessments (SORR) developed procedures to monitor how the budget was executed in accordance with the BOD decisions. In this way, General Schoomaker aligned the dollars to the command's most important acquisition programs.

During General Schoomaker and Holland's tenures, the command completed a number of significant resourcing initiatives. SORR completed three important initiatives: the TSOC's manpower study that downsized the headquarters to provide personnel to the TSOCs; creating two joint special operations aviation component commands; and keeping two National Guard Special Forces battalions. SORR secured the transfer of 1,687 Army spaces and funding to support a variety of readiness and operational requirements. The USSOCOM POMs maintained SOF readiness while modernizing by using off-the-shelf technology. With OSD, the Headquarters staff developed and executed the Defense Financial Accounting System, which managed resources through a joint accounting system. SORR got DOD to identify a Service to provide common support, base operations, and management headquarters support for unified commands and the TSOCs. Other initiatives included increasing the size of the 96th CA Battalion by 30 percent (84 billets) and creating the Navy Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School.

### Systems Acquisitions and Force Modernization

A primary rationale for establishing the command was the Services' failure to modernize SOF systems. Keen congressional interest in this area continued after the command was activated, and a 17 November 1987 conference report criticized the Defense Department for the lack of progress in procuring "SOF-peculiar equipment." Some on the Hill labeled this lack of progress as "malicious implementation" of the Nunn-Cohen Amendment. The Congress enacted an additional piece of legislation on 4 December 1987 which authorized CINCSOC to function as a "Head of Agency" for SOF acquisition programs, an authority normally reserved for the Service Secretaries.



Advanced SEAL Delivery System (ASDS) undergoes testing off the coast of Hawaii.

The command took another major step forward when the Deputy Secretary of Defense approved establishment of the Special Operations Research, Development, and Acquisition Center (SORDAC) on 10 December 1990. By early 1991, SORDAC had started performing its acquisition functions and operated within the Resources Directorate (J-8). In 1992, General Stiner consolidated the command's acquisition and contracting management functions in a new directorate under a Deputy for Acquisition, who was named the command's Acquisition Executive and Senior Procurement Executive. To discharge its acquisition responsibilities, the command concentrated on fielding systems meeting component requirements. Emphasizing a streamlined acquisition process, the command's procurement strategy was to modify existing weapons or buy "non-developmental" (off-the-shelf technology) systems—an approach which permitted quick, economical improvements to operational capabilities.

Since 1987, USSOCOM has fielded a number of modified or new systems affecting nearly every aspect of special operations. Some of the more notable were the MC-130H Combat Talon II long-range insertion aircraft and the SOCRATES automated intelligence handling system, both used in Operation

DESERT STORM, and the *Cyclone* class patrol coastal ships, used in Operations SUPPORT DEMOCRACY and UPHOLD DEMOCRACY. Other significant acquisitions included the MH-47E Chinook, a medium-range helicopter designed to conduct insertion operations under all weather conditions; the AC-130U Spectre gunship, used for close air support and reconnaissance; and the Mark V Special Operations Craft, a high performance combatant boat capable of being transported aboard C-5 aircraft. In 1997, the Acquisition Center's Naval Special Warfare Rigid Inflatable Boat (NSW-RIB) Program provided a long-sought capability for a high speed SEAL insertion and extraction craft. The program, which was completed under cost and months ahead of schedule while exceeding every performance objective, won the 1998 Defense Department's Packard Award for excellence in acquisition.

The Acquisition and Logistics Center (SOAL) set the benchmark for acquisition reform by developing and fielding new systems much faster than the norm. In 1998, the headquarters implemented SOALIS, the primary tool for providing information on all USSOCOM programs and a paperless system that saved money for future investments. In 1999, SOAL developed the Joint Special Operations Mission Planner that provided the theater special operations commands with a



AC-130U Spectre Gunship.



Rigid inflatable boats.

planning and command and control tool. SOCCENT used this planner during two operations. The SOF Intelligence Vehicle, which provided tactical intelligence processing and analysis to deployed units, won the David Packard Award in 1997. In 2000, SOAL was awarded the Defense Acquisition Executive Award for the advanced ground mobility system and for the multi-band intra-team radio.

Moreover, USSOCOM's acquisition capability was used a number of times during contingencies to provide SOF with the latest technology or to accelerate modifications. During DESERT STORM, for example, the command modified Chinooks with aircraft survivability equipment before they deployed to the Iraqi area of operations. USSOCOM procured specialized cold-weather gear for SOF deploying to Bosnia during JOINT ENDEAVOR. SOAL rapidly resourced statements of requirements for SOF going into Kosovo.

In 1998, General Schoomaker designated a few key acquisition programs as "flagship systems," so called because they were deemed essential to the future of SOF. In an era of tightly constrained budgets, funding for these strategic programs would be preserved, even at the expense of other acquisitions. The CV-22 aircraft program and the Advanced SEAL



Delivery System ASDS were among the first flagship programs. The ASDS has undergone testing in Hawaii.



CV-22 Osprey.

#### OPTEMPO AND QUALITY PEOPLE

There has been a steady increase in SOF deployments since USSOCOM's inception, measured by both personnel deployments and the number of countries visited. At varying times during the 1990s, certain "high demand/low density" specialties within Special Operations, Psychological Operations, and Civil Affairs forces endured repeated, long deployments. Concerns arose within the Department of Defense about the long term impact these absences were having on retention and readiness. During fiscal year 1993, USSOCOM averaged 2,036 personnel deployed away from home station per week; by fiscal year 1996 the average had more than doubled, climbing to 4,613. In fiscal year 1999, the number reached 5,141. From 1998 to 2001, SOF had deployed to an average of 150 countries per year. What caused this dramatic increase?

The fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War resulted in (to use General Lindsay's term) a more "violent peace"—regional destabilization, a new round of terrorism, and an increased availability of

weapons of mass destruction. The changed military threat made SOF's capabilities more relevant to the National Military Strategy.

Why were SOF used so often as an instrument of national policy? SOF were versatile, ready, and uniquely capable of operating in all politico-military environments, skilled at peacetime training, foreign internal defense, and nation assistance operations, as well as during full-blown conventional warfare. SOF's versatility was particularly useful in areas where political constraints prevented using conventional forces. In combat situations SOF were "force multipliers," conducting special reconnaissance, direct action, and coalition support, while in peacetime, they deployed to every continent and conducted training, supported the theater CINCs' strategy, and did things that conventional forces were not capable of doing.

Additionally, the theater CINCs and their staffs better understood SOF's capabilities. This increased awareness was due to USSOCOM's efforts to involve the other CINCs in planning and joint mission area analysis, and to support their Special Operations Commands with MFP-11 funding and personnel. Moreover, SOF were the theater commanders' force of choice for such diverse operations as counterdrug and demining training, foreign internal defense, medical exercises, non-combatant evacuations, or handling emergency situations like Operation PACIFIC HAVEN in 1996, when CA and PSYOP forces helped Kurdish refugees prepare to immigrate to the United States. As the number of peacekeeping missions and small-scale contingencies grew, so also did the need for SOF support.

Each CINCSOC identified as a basic requirement the recruitment and retention of people who could meet the rigorous warfighting standards of special operations and also adapt to the role of warrior-diplomat. Special operators were most likely to deploy to remote locations where, by virtue of being

among the first, and often the only, U.S. troops a host nation's military and political leaders might see, their military mission took on diplomatic responsibilities. When in combat, SOF went deep behind enemy lines—for example, providing special reconnaissance, or conducting “tip of the spear” H-Hour strike missions. Regardless of the challenge, SOF soldiers, sailors, and airmen have represented America's finest.

General Downing publicized the SOF Truths (first approved for use by then COL Sid Shacknow in the mid-1980s) as a way to codify the need for quality people:

- *Humans are more important than hardware.*
- *Quality is better than quantity.*
- *Special Operations Forces cannot be mass produced.*
- *Special Operations Forces cannot be created after emergencies.*

All subsequent CINCSOCs have embraced the SOF Truths. To ensure that the force remained professional, General Schoomaker made training and education—“trained for certainty, while being educated for uncertainty”—one of his hallmarks. SOF often encountered ambiguous circumstances while conducting peacetime operations, circumstances that could have a potential impact on strategic issues. The unique conditions SOF operated under required not only flexibility and mature judgment, but also uncompromising integrity.

General Schoomaker cited the maturity and personal qualities of SOF, coupled with their widespread presence around the world, as reasons why SOF served as “Global Scouts.” During crises, by virtue of their cultural awareness, regional familiarity, ability to respond quickly, or simply due to their

presence nearby, SOF were called upon to support American interests. Examples of SOF Global Scout missions included the recovery of casualties after Secretary of Commerce Brown's CT-43A crashed into a Croatian mountainside in 1996, the evacuation of U.S. citizens from Sierra Leone in 1997, and transporting aid to Vietnamese flood victims in 1999.

Under General Holland, SOF continued to play key roles in operations in the Balkans and in deployments around the world. CINCSOC used the example of an SF medic in Kuwait, SSG Christopher Hollingsworth, who was the first on the scene at the Udairi bombing range accident on 12 March 2001. He performed superbly under the most difficult of field conditions and proved the value of SOF medical training.

A sea change occurred on 11 September 2001, and the importance of SOF to national defense became paramount. CINCSOC used the SOF successes in Operation ENDURING FREEDOM to illustrate the quality of personnel assigned to SOCOM units. During the Unconventional Warfare campaign and after, special operations teams, led by Army captains, exerted profound influence on Afghan leaders. “This is how our people make a difference,” General Holland declared in February 2002. He noted that there was a great demand for SOF because of their professionalism, and concluded, “When we make a promise, we deliver.”



## MAJOR OPERATIONS: 1987 TO PRESENT

Since 1987, Special Operations Forces (SOF) have participated in a wide range of military operations—from peacetime engagement to a major theater war to a global war on terrorism. The U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) has worked steadily to enhance SOF support to the theater commanders in chief and the American ambassadors. Providing this support was not always easy, as it involved doing military operations in different ways and in some cases theater commanders in chief had to be convinced that SOF offered specialized capabilities to them. USSOCOM had just been established when SOF faced an operational challenge in the Persian Gulf, what the commander in chief of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) called guerrilla warfare on the high seas.

### *Persian Gulf*

Operation EARNEST WILL  
1987-1989

During Operation EARNEST WILL, the United States ensured that neutral oil tankers and other merchant ships could safely transit the Persian Gulf during the Iran-Iraq War. Iranian attacks on tankers prompted Kuwait to ask the United States in December 1986 to register 11 Kuwaiti tankers as American ships

so that they could be escorted by the U.S. Navy. President Reagan agreed to the Kuwaiti request on 10 March 1987, hoping it would deter Iranian attacks. Operation EARNEST WILL was planned by CENTCOM under General George B. Crist.

The protection offered by U.S. naval vessels, however, did not stop Iran, which used mines and small boats to harass the convoys steaming to and from Kuwait. To stop these attacks, the U.S. needed surveillance and patrol forces in the northern Persian Gulf and bases for these patrol forces. SOF, including Army helicopters and Navy SEALs and Special Boat Units, had the best trained personnel and most capable equipment for monitoring hostile activity, particularly at night when the Iranians conducted their missions. The Army's special operations helicopter crews trained to fly and fight at night. These helicopters were difficult to spot on radar and relatively quiet, allowing them to get close to a target. Shallow-draft naval special warfare patrol boats could ply waters that had not been swept for mines.

In late July 1987, RADM Harold J. Bernsen, commander of the Middle East Force, requested naval special warfare assets. Six Mark III Patrol Boats, other Special Boat assets, and two SEAL platoons deployed in August. At the same time, two MH-6 and four AH-6 Army special operations helicopters and



Army and Navy SOF used the oil servicing barge *Hercules* as an operating base.





*Iran Ajr*, caught laying mines, was disabled by Army Special Operations helicopters and boarded by SEALs.

39 men received orders to the region in a deployment called Operation PRIME CHANCE I.

The Middle East Force decided to convert two oil servicing barges, *Hercules* and *Wimbrown VII*, into mobile sea bases. Besides obviating the need to ask for land bases, the mobile sea bases allowed SOF in the northern Persian Gulf to thwart clandestine Iranian mining and small boat attacks. Each mobile sea base housed 10 small boats, three helicopters, sufficient fuel, ammunition, equipment, and workshops to support their operations, and more than 150 men. In October, the mobile sea bases became operational.

In the interim, SOF operated from various surface vessels. On 8 August, the helicopters, designated SEABATs, escorted the third EARNEST WILL convoy and looked for signs of Iranian mine laying. The patrol boats began escort missions on 9 September.

Soon SOF showed what they could do. On the evening of 21 September, one MH-6 and two AH-6 helicopters took off from the frigate *Jarrett* (FFG-33) to track an Iranian ship, the

*Iran Ajr*. The helicopters observed the *Iran Ajr* extinguish its lights and begin laying mines. Receiving permission to attack, the helicopters fired guns and rockets, stopping the ship. As the *Iran Ajr*'s crew began to push mines over the side, the helicopters resumed firing until the crew abandoned ship.

RADM Bernsen then ordered the SEAL platoon from the *Guadalcanal* to board the *Iran Ajr*. Two patrol boats provided security. Shortly after first light, the SEALs boarded the ship and found nine mines and various arming mechanisms. The patrol boats rescued 10 Iranians in a lifeboat and 13 in life vests floating nearby. Documents found aboard the ship showed where the Iranians had laid mines, implicating Iran in mining international waters. The *Iran Ajr* was sunk in deep water on 26 September.

The mobile sea bases entered service in early October in the northern Persian Gulf. From these bases, U.S. patrol craft and helicopters could monitor Iranian patrol craft



Mines found aboard the *Iran Ajr*.

in the northern gulf and deter their attacks. Within a few days, patrol boat and AH/MH-6 helicopter personnel had determined the Iranian pattern of activity—the Iranians hid during the day near oil and gas separation platforms in Iranian waters and at night they headed toward the Middle Shoals Buoy, a navigation aid for the tankers.

With this knowledge, SOF sent three of their helicopters and two patrol craft toward the buoy on the night of 8 October. The AH/MH-6 helicopters arrived first and were fired upon by three Iranian boats anchored near the buoy. After a short but intense firefight, the helicopters sank all three boats. The U.S. patrol boats moved in and picked up five Iranian survivors who were subsequently repatriated to Iran.

SOF next saw action on 19 October, three days after an Iranian Silkworm missile hit the reflagged tanker *Sea Isle City* near the oil terminal outside Kuwait City. Seventeen crewmen and the American captain were injured in the missile attack. In Operation NIMBLE ARCHER, four destroyers shelled the two oil platforms in the Rostam oil field on 19 October. After the shelling, a SEAL platoon and a demolition unit planted explosive charges on one of the platforms to destroy it.



AH-6 helicopter fire sank this Iranian Boghammar during a firefight on 8 October 1987.



SEALs approaching the Rashadat Gas/Oil Separation Platform after naval shelling.

The SEALs next boarded and searched a third platform two miles away. Documents and radios were taken for intelligence purposes.

After NIMBLE ARCHER, *Hercules* and *Wimbrown VII* continued to operate near Karan Island, within 15 miles of each other, and sent patrol boats and helicopters on regular patrols. In November 1987, two MH-60 Blackhawk helicopters arrived to provide nighttime combat search and rescue. As EARNEST WILL continued, SOF were rotated on a regular basis; eventually, some personnel rotated back to the Persian Gulf for second or even third tours. In 1988, the Army replaced the AH/MH-6 helicopters and crews with OH-58D Kiowa helicopters.

On 14 April 1988, approximately 65 miles east of Bahrain, the U.S. frigate *Samuel B. Roberts* (FFG-58) hit a mine, blowing a 30 by 23 foot hole in its hull. Ten sailors were injured. The United States struck back hard, attacking the Iranian frigate *Sabalan* and oil platforms in the Sirri and Sassan oil fields on 18 April during Operation PRAYING MANTIS. After U.S. warships bombarded the Sirri platform and set it ablaze, a UH-60 with a SEAL platoon flew toward the platform but was



unable to get close enough because of the roaring fire. Secondary explosions soon wrecked the platform.

Elsewhere, U.S. forces wreaked havoc on Iranian vessels, sinking two and damaging five others. In the northern Persian Gulf, Iranian forces fired two Silkworm missiles at the mobile sea barges, but chaff fired by the frigate *Gary* decoyed the missiles. Later that day Iranian F-4 jet fighters and patrol boats approached the mobile sea bases, but fled when the *Gary* locked its fire control radars on them.

Thereafter, Iranian attacks on neutral ships dropped drastically. On 18 July, Iran accepted the United Nations cease fire; on 20 August 1988, the Iran-Iraq War ended. On 16 July, the last AH-6 and MH-6 helicopters departed from the theater. In December 1988, the *Wimbrown VII* entered a Bahraini shipyard for reconversion to civilian use. The final EARNEST WILL convoy was run that month. The U.S. Navy had escorted 259 ships in 127 convoys since June 1987. The mobile sea base *Hercules* was not withdrawn until September 1989. The remaining SEALs, patrol boats, and helicopters then returned to the United States.

Special Operations Forces provided the critical skills necessary to help CENTCOM gain control of the northern Persian Gulf and counter Iran's small boats and minelayers. Their ability to work at night proved vital, since Iranian units used darkness to hide their actions. The most important lessons to come out of Operation EARNEST WILL were the need to have highly trained Special Operations Forces capable of responding rapidly to crises anywhere around the globe and the vital need for interoperability between conventional and special operations forces. Additionally, based on EARNEST WILL operational requirements, USSOCOM would acquire new weapons systems—the patrol coastal ships and the MARK V Special Operations Craft.

## ***Panama***

### **Operation JUST CAUSE 1989-1990**

The invasion of Panama, known as Operation JUST CAUSE, was an unusually delicate, violent, and complex operation. Its key objectives were the capture of Manuel Noriega and the establishment of a democratic government. America applied overwhelming combat power during the invasion, seeking to minimize loss of life and destruction of property, and to speed the transition to friendly relations. The U.S. had bases located there, and U.S. troops had a long-standing relationship with the Panama Defense Forces (PDF). American SOF personnel, having been based in Panama, were acutely aware of the delicate nature of the mission and were instrumental in achieving U.S. objectives.

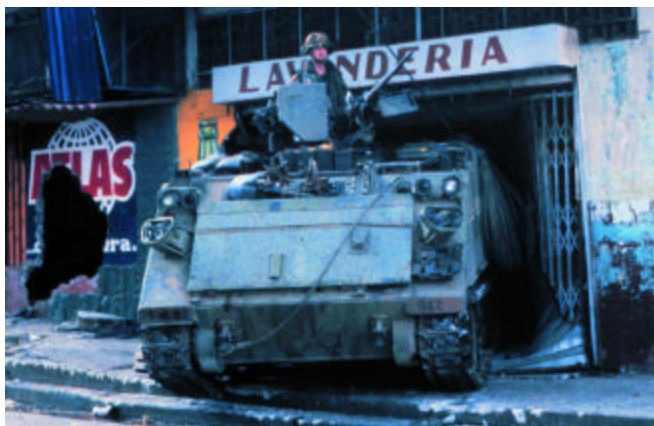
During Operation JUST CAUSE, the special operations component of Joint Task Force South (the overall invasion force) was the Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF). The JSOTF, commanded by Major General Wayne A. Downing, was organized into smaller task forces: TF RED (the Army's 75th Ranger Regiment), TF BLACK (Army Special Forces), and TF WHITE (SEALs and Special Boat Unit assets). These task forces were supported by Psychological Operations and Civil Affairs units, Army Special Operations helicopters, and USAF air commando units.

### **The Opening Mission**

The JSOTF's principal H-Hour missions were the capture of Noriega and the destruction of the PDF's ability to fight. As it turned out, the U.S. forces did not know Noriega's location at H-Hour; accordingly, the JSOTF focused on the H-Hour missions against the PDF. The attack on the Comandancia (the PDF's headquarters in



Panama City) and the rescue of an American citizen from the adjoining prison (the Carcel Modelo) were the responsibility of a joint task force that included Special Forces ground elements, SOF helicopters and AC-130 gunships, and TF GATOR [M-113 armored personnel carriers and soldiers from the 4th Battalion, 6th Infantry (Mechanized)]. Because of indications that H-Hour had been compromised, the attack on the Comandancia began 15 minutes early, at 0045 on 20 December 1989.



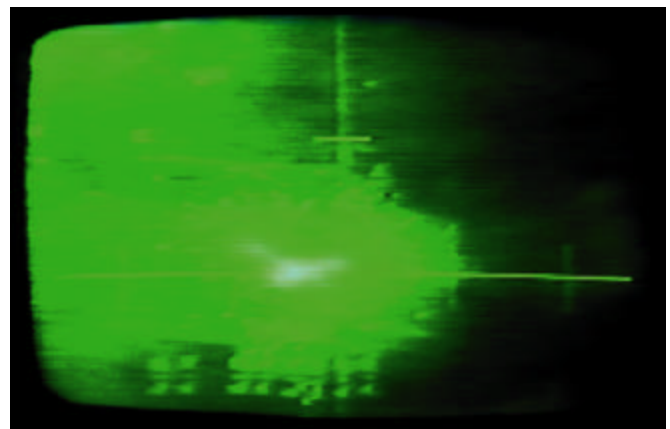
M-113 armored personnel carriers supported SOF's attack on the Comandancia and prison.

TF GATOR was responsible for moving M-113s to blocking positions around the Comandancia and the prison, and then, in conjunction with the AC-130 and AH-6 gunships, attacking and leveling the PDF headquarters. Maneuvering to the blocking positions, they came under increasingly heavy sniper fire from PDF soldiers in buildings (including a 16-story high rise) on the west side of the Comandancia and prison complex. TF GATOR suffered some wounded and one killed while moving to their blocking positions. Near the target, TF GATOR encountered roadblocks; the M-113s squashed some roadblocks and went around others. The heavy enemy fire, coming from various directions, continued as the armored personnel carriers began their assault on the Comandancia.

At 0045, the revised H-Hour, AC-130s and AH-6s started firing upon the Comandancia area. The PDF shot down the lead AH-6, but its crew managed a controlled crash in the Comandancia courtyard. They were in the wrong place at the wrong time as the AC-130s were pounding the Comandancia. By keeping their wits about them, they evaded both enemy and friendly fire for over two hours, made it to the back wall (where they captured a PDF soldier), climbed the wall, and linked up with a TF GATOR blocking position.

By now buildings in the compound were ablaze, and the smoke obscured the area for the AC-130 firing. One TF GATOR element was fired upon by an AC-130, wounding 12 soldiers. A second AC-130 volley about an hour later wounded nine more. At first, the soldiers believed that they had been attacked by PDF mortars, but during the second volley, they realized it was coming from the AC-130 and called through the fire support network to end the shooting.

During the attack on the Comandancia, a rescue force had entered the prison and freed the American citizen. The helicopter carrying part of the rescue force and the former prisoner was shot down and crashed in an alley to the north of the prison. Everyone on board, except the former prisoner, was injured to one degree or another, but the rescue force reacted



As captured on FLIR tape, an AC-130 pounds the Comandancia with 105mm cannon rounds.

as they had trained, formed a defensive position, contacted a TF GATOR blocking element, and were evacuated by M-113s.

TF GATOR kept the Comandancia isolated during the day of 20 December and continued to receive sporadic sniper fire. That afternoon, Company C, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment arrived from Omar Torrijos International Airport to clear the Comandancia. All of these forces then engaged in follow-on missions.



After seizing the Torrijos Airport/Tocumen Airfield, Rangers cleared the Comandancia.

### ***Task Force RED***

Task Force RED was the largest component of the Joint Special Operations Task Force. It consisted of the Army's 75th Ranger Regiment reinforced by contingents from the 4th Psychological Operations Group (PSYOP) and 96th Civil Affairs (CA) Battalion, and included Air Force Special Tactics teams and Marine Corps/Naval Gunfire liaison troops. Close air support aircraft included AH-6 attack helicopters from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment, AC-130H gunships from the 1st Special Operations Wing, and from the conventional forces, AH-64 Apaches and F-117A fighter-bombers.

The task force was to perform two simultaneous airborne assaults at H-Hour (0100 on 20 December 1989). One contingent

would parachute onto the Omar Torrijos International Airport/Tocumen military airport complex, while another would drop onto Rio Hato airfield. Upon securing these objectives, TF RED would then link-up with conventional forces for follow-on combat operations.

### **The Assault on Torrijos Airport/Tocumen Airfield**

Omar Torrijos International Airport was the main international airport serving Panama, and the adjoining Tocumen military airfield was the home base of the Panamanian Air Force. Capturing Torrijos/Tocumen was crucial to the JUST CAUSE campaign plan because it would enable the 82nd Airborne Division to come into the country, while preventing the 2nd Panamanian Defense Force (PDF) Company and the Panamanian Air Force from interfering with American operations. The Torrijos/Tocumen complex formed a target area approximately six kilometers long and two kilometers wide.

The TF RED commander, Colonel William F. "Buck" Kernan, gave the mission of capturing Torrijos/Tocumen to 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, commanded by LTC Robert W. Wagner. The Rangers had a tight schedule to seize this complex—an 82nd Airborne Division brigade was supposed to jump onto the complex only 45 minutes after H-Hour to start follow-on missions. First Battalion's three companies were augmented by Company C, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, PSYOP teams, a Civil Affairs team, two AH-6 attack helicopters, Air Force Special Tactics teams (combat controllers and pararescuemen), and an AC-130H gunship.

LTC Wagner's plan called for the helicopters and AC-130H to attack the PDF positions at H-Hour, just prior to the Ranger parachute assault. After parachuting in, Company A would seize the Panamanian Air Force compound and destroy the aircraft. Company C, reinforced with a platoon from Company B, would seize the 2nd PDF

compound and destroy the PDF Company. The rest of Company B, reinforced with 12 gun jeeps and 10 motorcycles, would clear both runways and establish blocking positions to prevent other PDF forces from interfering with the battalion's operations. Finally, Company C, 3rd Battalion would clear the smaller buildings near the Torrijos terminal, isolate the terminal building, and then enter the terminal building and destroy PDF resistance there.



Rangers preparing for airborne assault.

Prior to the attack, three combat controllers and one pararescueman placed navigation beacons near the end of the runway. The attack began at 0100, with the AC-130H and AH-6s opening fire on PDF positions on the airfield. The AH-6s eliminated three targets while the AC-130H fired on the 2nd Rifle Company's barracks and headquarters building. It should be remembered that TF GATOR and other units had attacked the Comandancia in Panama City 15 minutes early, at 0045, which meant the PDF at Torrijos/Tocumen knew of the invasion prior to the Rangers' airdrop. At 0103, the first jumpers left their aircraft.

Company A received only sporadic fire and secured all of its objectives within two hours after capturing virtually the entire Panamanian Air Force on the ground. The company captured about 20 Panamanian Air Force personnel hiding in one of the hangars. Company B also landed on target and quickly

secured its blocking positions. Like Company A, it received only sporadic enemy fire and took some prisoners. The biggest problem Company B had was with Panamanian vehicles ignoring its warning signs and barricades and trying to run its blocking positions. Generally these vehicles turned around and fled after the Rangers fired warning shots, but one vehicle had to be disabled by shooting out its tires. One of the vehicles that fled from warning shots contained Manuel Noriega, who had been visiting the Cereme Military Recreation Center. Company C assaulted the barracks of the PDF's 2nd Company and received only ineffective enemy fire; they quickly cleared the area, killing one PDF soldier who had refused to surrender.

Company C, 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment was to secure the international air terminal, and this proved to be the only portion of the assault on Torrijos/Tocumen that was significantly more difficult than expected. First, one-fourth of the company landed in ten-foot-tall cunna grass to the west of the runway and took two hours to join the main body. The depleted Company C had no trouble securing



AC-130H Spectre crewmember loading a 105mm round.



its objectives outside the terminal building, however, and the troops were impressed with how completely the AH-6s had destroyed the guard house outside the terminal and killed the two guards there. The 3rd platoon seized the fire station on the north side of the terminal and then received fire from the second floor of the terminal.

These Rangers entered the terminal from the north, where they encountered two surprises. First, two civilian flights had arrived just prior to H-Hour, and about 400 civilians were in the terminal. The other surprise was that the PDF troops defended the terminal more determinedly than anywhere else in the Torrijos/Tocumen complex.



American soldiers the morning after seizing Torrijos/Tocumen.

When two Rangers searched one of the airport's huge men's rooms on the second floor, two PDF soldiers jumped out of a stall and shot one of the Rangers several times with a pistol. The other Ranger returned fire and, with the assistance of two more Rangers, dragged his wounded buddy out of the men's room. In the process, the Ranger pulling the wounded man was himself shot twice in the back of the head, but his kevlar helmet stopped both rounds. From outside the men's room door, the unhurt Rangers threw in grenades, but the stalls protected the PDF soldiers. The Rangers then re-entered the men's room and waited for the PDF to show

themselves. The Rangers got the better of the ensuing hand-to-hand struggle. One of the PDF soldiers was killed in the men's room while the other was knocked out of the window; he fell two stories and almost landed on a Ranger patrolling outside. When the PDF soldier tried to draw his pistol, the Ranger killed him.

Meanwhile, 2nd Platoon entered the terminal from the south and started clearing the building, with one squad on each of the three main floors. Enemy soldiers opened fire on the third floor, but the Rangers' counterattack drove them from the terminal, and they cleared the rest of the third floor without incident.

The situation on the first floor was more difficult; about ten PDF troopers had taken two American girls hostage. When their escape route led them right into the Ranger security detail stationed outside the terminal, they fled back inside, where 2nd Platoon Rangers cornered them after several exchanges of fire. At 0500, after a tense two-and-a-half-hour standoff, the Rangers announced they were going to come in shooting. Rather than face an all-out assault, the holdouts then released their hostages and surrendered.

Later that morning, at about 1100, the 82nd Airborne Division assumed operational control of 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment and began operations out of Torrijos/Tocumen. Likewise, Company C, 3rd Battalion was put under the operational control of TF BAYONET to clear La Comandancia at 1500 on 20 December. The Rangers' extensive training in airfield seizure and building clearing, along with their detailed mission plan, were key factors in their successful seizure of the Torrijos/Tocumen complex with minimal collateral damage and casualties.



## The Attack on Rio Hato Airfield

The Panamanian military base near the small village of Rio Hato was located 65 miles west of Panama City. It contained a large airfield and was home to two PDF companies: the 6th Rifle Company (Mechanized), equipped with 19 armored cars, and the 7th Rifle Company, an elite counterinsurgency force known to be loyal to Noriega. In addition, the base housed a PDF engineer platoon and PDF training schools. TF RED's mission was to destroy PDF forces and seize the airfield for follow on missions. The total number of PDF forces was estimated to exceed 500 men; these units, particularly the 7th Rifle Company, were expected to offer stiff opposition to the TF RED forces.

The Rio Hato military base ranged along the coastline of the Gulf of Panama, with the airfield runway nearly perpendicular to the shoreline. The barracks for the 6th and 7th Companies were on the runway's southwest side. There were a number of beach houses along a dirt lane to the south of the runway; Manuel Noriega owned (and occasionally used) one of them. To the west of the runway, and above the 6th and 7th Companies' barracks, was the PDF school complex. The Pan-American highway bisected the airfield.

The TF RED commander, Colonel Kernan, led the forces assaulting Rio Hato, which included the 2nd Ranger Battalion, the 3rd Ranger Battalion (minus one company, used in the Torrijos/Tocumen assault), and elements of the 4th Psychological Operations Group, Civil Affairs assets, Air Force Special Tactics teams, and Marine Corps Air/Naval Gunfire liaison troops. Aerial fire support was provided by two F-117A fighter-bombers, two AH-64 and four AH-6 helicopters, and one AC-130H gunship. The 2nd and 3rd Battalions split the responsibility for taking and holding ground: the 2nd was to parachute into the area along the southern edge of the runway and around

the PDF barracks and engage the enemy, while the 3rd was to jump farther north, securing the area from counterattacks and clearing the runway.

Thirteen C-130 transports were cross-loaded with Rangers from both battalions. The aircraft were to approach from the south, with the 2nd Battalion soldiers parachuting first and the 3rd Battalion troops jumping second. The 2nd Battalion's Company A would assault and clear the PDF school complex. Company B, 2nd Battalion would assault the 7th Company from the east, and if it was still effective after destroying that unit (planners had anticipated 30 percent casualties), it would push westward and clear the 6th Company area. If Company B suffered excessive casualties, Company C would take over the assault. If Company B did not need reinforcement, then Company C would seize Noriega's beach house.

Though the Rangers wanted the F-117As to hit the PDF barracks, the bombing targets had been changed to an area near the barracks in the hope of frightening, rather than killing, the PDF. The bombs landed on schedule, at H-Hour, although one missed its target and exploded harmlessly near the beach. The AH-6s and AC-130H aircraft immediately followed with attacks on their designated targets. Of particular importance, the AC-130H destroyed two anti-aircraft positions before the Rangers jumped.

In spite of the three minute air attack, the Rangers jumped into effective anti-aircraft machine-gun fire. Eleven of the aircraft carrying Rangers were hit, and one Ranger was hit by anti-aircraft fire while still in the aircraft. The jump, however, went on as scheduled at 0103. Those Rangers who had jumped into Grenada in 1983 for Operation URGENT FURY judged the enemy fire to have been heavier at Rio Hato.

Once on the ground, the 2nd Battalion Rangers saw a lot of tracers, but were able to return fire and assemble without too much

trouble. The PDF troops apparently had left their barracks upon learning that the U.S. troops were coming and had either set up defenses on and around the airfield, or fled. As planned, Company A assembled before the other units and moved up to clear the school complex.

As Company A was advancing on the school complex, Company B began its assault on the 7th Company area. After using demolition charges to blow holes in the wall surrounding the compound, Company B moved in and set about clearing each building, room by room. Having cleared the 7th's area without serious losses, Company B continued to push west and had begun clearing the 6th Company area by dawn on 21 December. Company B's success freed Company C to assault Noriega's beach house area two hours after H-Hour, and the Rangers cleared the house by morning.

Company B finished clearing the 6th Company barracks area that morning as well and, with all of its initial assault objectives secured, continued to advance west into the small village inhabited by the families of the PDF troops. The Rangers detained all the adult males found there for questioning, assuming the vast majority were PDF troops in hiding.

The 3rd Battalion Rangers, who were loaded first in each of the 13 C-130s, jumped after the 2nd Battalion. By the time they jumped into the warm, humid night, the PDF knew they were coming. The 3rd's airborne assault included heavy "drops" of four jeeps and six motorcycles. Company A's motorcycles were to race north along the runway and screen the Americans from possible counterattacks, while the Company B jeep teams were to establish blocking positions and watch for possible PDF activities.

When the Company A Rangers jumped, they scattered from south of the Pan American Highway to well north of it. This company's primary mission was to neutralize the .50

caliber machine gun positioned on the concrete and stone entryway leading to the Rio Hato airfield. By happenstance, the company's executive officer and a few other Rangers landed within 30 feet of the entryway; they killed the PDF gunner as he was firing at the other Rangers parachuting to the ground and took possession of the fortified position.



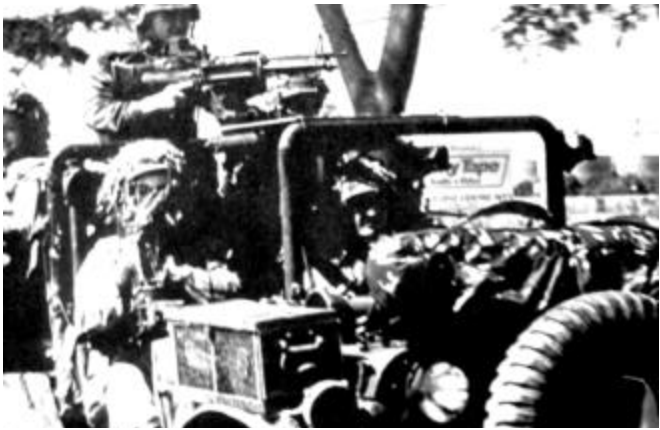
Rangers captured a .50 caliber machine gun guarding the stone entryway to Rio Hato.

Other Company A elements had begun to clear the NCO academy headquarters and classroom areas. The Rangers encountered more PDF soldiers than expected, and in the words of LTC Joseph Hunt, 3rd battalion commander, these PDF soldiers "gave them a good run for their money for about 30 minutes." As the Rangers aggressively cleared the NCO academy buildings, the Panamanian soldiers abandoned their resistance and fled from the advancing Rangers. Company A Rangers did capture about 167 cadets. Without their superior fire discipline and training, the Rangers could have easily attacked these cadets before learning that they were unarmed, frightened, and eager to surrender. Within an hour of H-Hour, Company A had secured its objectives.

Company B, 3rd Battalion severed the Pan American Highway on the east side of the airfield. There was more traffic on the Pan American Highway than expected, and the blocking element fired warning shots at a few



vehicles to force them to turn around. The largest Company B element concentrated on clearing the runway south of the highway so that aircraft could begin landing, and this proved more time-consuming than anticipated. The Rangers quickly removed such obstacles as barrels, barbed wire, and trucks, but needed extra time to pick up the hundreds of parachutes left behind by the airborne assault. Company B Rangers also took control of the air traffic control tower. Approximately 1.5 hours into the operation, the Rangers finished clearing the runway, and C-130s began landing with more people and additional supplies.



Rangers used this type of jeep at Rio Hato.

The Rangers who were assigned to end PDF resistance north of the Pan American Highway encountered a surprising amount of PDF opposition. Here, as night turned to dawn, some PDF soldiers conducted a deliberate withdrawal, fighting from building to building through a small built-up area. A Ranger element engaged the PDF and called for fire support from two AH-6 helicopter gunships. The gunships fired on the buildings, but unbeknownst to the pilots, an element of Rangers moved into a tree line to flank the PDF. As the gunships came around for a second pass, one pilot saw movement in the trees and, believing they were PDF soldiers, fired upon the Rangers, killing two and wounding four. The movement of the Rangers into the tree line had not been radioed to the AH-6 pilots.

Having secured the military complex on 20 December, the Rangers conducted follow-on missions out of Rio Hato for the next three days. At 2200 on 20 December, Company A, 2nd Battalion left Rio Hato aboard special operations helicopters and, at 0230 on the 21st, took over security for the American embassy in Panama City. That same day, the Rangers participated in one of the early surrender missions—what became known as the “Ma Bell” Campaign—when COL Kernan brought the PDF leaders of the Penonome Prison and 6th Military Zone Headquarters to Rio Hato to discuss their forces’ surrender. Later, with an AC-130H circling overhead, the 3rd Battalion’s Company A accepted the surrender of the town’s garrison; then, the Rangers demonstrated a “dry run” assault on the prison, showing the Panamanians what would have happened to them if they had resisted. Word of this display of force and surrender quickly spread throughout the remaining cuartels in the countryside. After relocating to Howard AFB, the Rangers, in conjunction with Special Forces soldiers, conducted the “Ma Bell” surrender of David, a major city in western Panama.

The Rangers also performed stability operations in areas around Panama City. In response to civil disturbances and continued PDF and Dignity Battalion (Noriega’s paramilitary supporters) activities, the 2nd Battalion, 75th Rangers set up operations in Area of Operation (AO) Diaz, an area containing the towns of Alcalde Diaz and Las Cumbres, on 27 December. With the assistance of PSYOP forces, they created a visible American presence by establishing checkpoints and blocking positions, and running “saturation” patrols and night ambushes. While in AO Diaz, the Rangers rounded up former PDF and Dignity Battalion members and seized several caches of weapons. The American presence of Rangers, PSYOP, and Civil Affairs soldiers stabilized the area and allowed the new government to reestablish control.

The Rangers came out of Panama with a number of lessons learned. The tactical plan was well prepared, coordinated, and rehearsed, enabling the successful completion of their missions. JUST CAUSE validated the Rangers' mission essential procedures and techniques, and their responsiveness to contingencies. Lessons learned included recognizing the importance of intelligence gathering and management; planning logistical support for follow-on missions; emphasizing training and equipping the regiment for military operations in urban areas; and enhancing the regiment's interaction with conventional and joint forces through the use of liaison elements.

#### Task Force WHITE

On 19 December 1989, TF WHITE, the Naval Special Warfare component of the JSOTF, established operations at Rodman Naval Station on the west side of the Panama Canal. The task force consisted of five SEAL platoons, three patrol boats, four riverine patrol boats, and two light patrol boats (22-foot Boston Whalers), which were divided among four task units. Each task unit had its own H-Hour mission: Task Unit (TU) Papa, the largest unit, was to deny use of the Paitilla Airfield; TU Whiskey was to destroy a Panamanian patrol boat in Balboa Harbor; TU Charlie and TU Foxtrot were charged with securing, respectively, the Atlantic and Pacific entrances to the Panama Canal.

The Paitilla Airfield assault force, TU Papa, had a 62-man ground force comprised of three SEAL platoons (Bravo, Delta, and Golf platoons), Air Force combat controllers to perform liaison with an AC-130H gunship, and a command, control, communications, and mortar element. A 26-man support team included surveillance forces, a signals intelligence team, a psychological operations team, and boat crews.

At 1930 on 19 December, 15 combat rubber raiding craft, carrying the ground force, launched from the Howard AFB beach, eight miles from Paitilla, while two patrol boats left from Rodman Naval Station. At 2330, with the rubber boats waiting off the airfield, two SEALs swam ashore to reconnoiter the landing site and mark the beach with a strobe light.

At 0045 on the 20th, coming ashore near the end of the runway, the ground force heard firing and explosions from the attack on the Comandancia. The element of surprise had been lost. The SEALs hurried up the trail, through a hole in the security fence, and formed into platoons near the southern end of the runway. Learning of a report that Noriega was about to arrive in a small plane, Delta platoon set an ambush halfway up the runway for a few minutes, before advancing toward the tower. The other two platoons, Golf and Bravo, had moved up the grass apron on the west side of the runway.

By 0105, the SEALs were in front of the three northernmost hangars. Panamanians guarded the middle hangar, which housed Noriega's jet, and the hangar to the north. Golf platoon was in the lead, with one of its squads moving toward the northern edge of the tarmac. After an exchange of demands between the Americans and guards, a SEAL opened fire on a PDF guard who had assumed a firing position. A short but fierce firefight ensued, and within a matter of a minute or two, eight



Manuel Noriega's shot-up jet.

SEALs were wounded, five seriously. The Golf platoon commander called for assistance on his radio, reporting heavy casualties. The ground force commander ordered other platoons to reinforce these SEALs. Two SEAL reinforcements were wounded as they maneuvered to engage the PDF in the hangars. The combination of SEAL fire discipline and superior firepower soon took effect, however, and after three firefights, the remaining PDF defenders withdrew at about 0117.

The SEALs reported the airfield was secure at 0146, and a MEDEVAC helicopter finally arrived at 0205 to recover the wounded. By 0315, the SEALs had set up a more defensible perimeter on the southeast side of the airfield. The reaction platoon from Rodman arrived a few minutes later. An AC-130H gunship, unable to establish reliable communications with the ground force, was replaced by an AC-130A at 0324. At dawn a patrol conducted a reconnaissance of the hangars, while other SEALs dragged airplanes onto the runway to block its use. The relief force did not arrive until 1400 on the 21st, when five CH-47 helicopters delivered a Ranger company. The SEALs left aboard the same helicopters. A planned 5-hour mission had turned into a 37-hour operation. Four SEALs had died and eight others were wounded.

Subsequent to their operations at Paitilla airfield, TU Papa conducted several search and seizure missions looking for arms caches and Noriega followers. The unit was disbanded on 1 January 1990, and members returned to the United States the next day.

TU Whiskey's H-Hour mission was to destroy the Panamanian patrol boat docked in Balboa Harbor by having SEALs place demolition charges on its hull. Around 2300 on 19 December, two combat rubber raider craft left Rodman Naval Station, cut across the canal, passing vessels, and tied up in a mangrove stand near the docks. The first craft took two SEALs closer to the pier, where they slipped overboard for the swim to the

Panamanian patrol boat, *Presidente Poras*. The next swim pair entered the canal five minutes later. The SEALs used the Draeger underwater breathing apparatus which left no trail of air bubbles. Reaching the boat, the SEALs attached haversacks of explosives to the propeller shafts, set the detonators, and swam to their extraction point. At 0100, an explosion ripped a hole in the *Presidente Poras*, and it sank. As the SEALs swam, they passed near a firefight between American and Panamanian forces; despite the hazards, the SEALs returned safely. This mission marked the first successful combat swimmer demolition attack by U.S. forces.

Following the Balboa Harbor mission, TU Whiskey participated in the seizure of Noriega's yacht on 20 December and the capture of the Balboa Yacht Club the next day. On 23 December, TU Whiskey members helped repel PDF forces trying to board the merchant ship *Emanuel B* in the Panama Canal. Its last mission called for it to seize Noriega's beach house on Culebra Island on 25 December. TU Whiskey redeployed back to the States on 2 January 1990.

TU Charlie, assigned to secure the Caribbean side of the Panama Canal, worked closely with TF Atlantic. The task unit had eight SEALs, twelve soldiers, two riverine patrol boats, and two Army mechanized landing craft. On the night of the invasion, TU Charlie blocked all ships from entering the Canal from the Caribbean side and patrolled the shipping channel near Colon, preventing the PDF from commandeering boats and protecting the canal from sabotage.

After conducting patrols all night, at 0930 on 20 December, TU Charlie received a report that about 30 PDF members had boarded a German merchant ship, *Asian Senator*, in Cristobal. Once at the pier, the SEALs saw men in civilian clothes running down the *Asian Senator's* brow and other men on the ship throwing weapons onto the pier for them. One of the mechanized landing craft and the two



riverine patrol boats fired at the brow. The Panamanians on the ship, shaken by this firepower, surrendered. The SEALs came under fire as they searched the PDF prisoners. As the volume of fire grew, the SEALs evacuated the prisoners to their boats. During subsequent patrols of the harbor and coastline, TU Charlie occasionally exchanged fire with PDF on the shore. TU Charlie later detained and searched a Colombian vessel, which yielded a cargo of looted electronic equipment, but no drugs or PDF. On Christmas Eve, the SEALs searched 31 boats moored in the Panama Canal Yacht Club. TU Charlie was deactivated on 26 December.

TU Foxtrot, the fourth task unit, conducted maritime patrols along the Pacific Ocean approaches to the Panama Canal. At H-Hour, SEALs in three patrol boats guarded the waters around Howard AFB, and two riverine patrol boats covered the approaches to the Bridge of the Americas. SEALs in a cayuga canoe searched the small islands off Howard AFB for infiltrators. For the remainder of the night, the patrol boats searched and detained Panamanian fishing and pleasure boats found on the local waters.

On 21 December, the SEALs located and searched *Passe Porte Tout* and *Macho de Monde*, two of Noriega's sport yachts, capturing 18 Panamanians and large quantities of small arms and ammunition. TU Foxtrot continued its maritime interdiction operations, and beginning on 26 December, it guarded the waters adjacent to the Papal Nunciature, the last refuge of Noriega. No incidents took place during this mission, and TU Foxtrot was disestablished on 2 January 1990.

Naval Special Warfare forces successfully executed all their missions during Operation JUST CAUSE. Success did not come easily, as four SEALs died and eight more were wounded during the fight for Paitilla airfield, but TF WHITE accomplished its other

missions without casualties. These operations underscored the value of forward-basing these units.

### Task Force BLACK

TF BLACK was activated 18 December 1989 under the command of Colonel Robert C. "Jake" Jacobelly, who also served as commander of Special Operations Command South (SOC SOUTH). Before H-Hour, SOC SOUTH personnel and the headquarters unit of 3rd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) [SFG (A)] moved to Albrook Air Force Base and together served as the TF BLACK headquarters and staff.

The 3rd Battalion, 7th SFG (A), commanded by LTC Roy R. Trumbull, formed the core of TF BLACK and was reinforced by Company A, 1st Battalion, 7th SFG (A) from Ft. Bragg, North Carolina. TF BLACK had use of five MH-60 helicopters from the 617th Special Operations Aviation Detachment and two UH-60 helicopters from the 1st Battalion, 228th Aviation Regiment. Air Force AC-130s from the 1st Special Operations Wing were available to provide fire support.

### H-Hour Missions

At H-Hour, TF BLACK was to perform two reconnaissance and surveillance missions. The first, conducted by a Special Forces team from Company B, 3rd Battalion, 7th SFG (A), was to observe the PDF's Battalion 2000 at Fort Cimarron. By the time the team was in place, however, Battalion 2000 had already left the fort. The second mission involved watching the 1st PDF Company at Tinajitas. These Special Forces did not see or hear anything except for two mortar rounds being fired early in the morning.

Another reconnaissance mission was changed to direct action: seize and deny use of the Pacora River Bridge. The TF BLACK element, commanded by Major Kevin M.

Higgins, consisted of 24 men from Company A, 3rd Battalion, 7th SFG (A), and 3 helicopters. The bridge was the best place to prevent PDF Battalion 2000 from moving out of Fort Cimarron to Panama City. At ten minutes after midnight, small arms fire broke out at Albrook AFB while the troops were preparing to load onto their helicopters. Higgins and his troops dashed to the waiting aircraft and departed under fire.

As the helicopters neared the bridge, the lead helicopter pilot spotted a column of six PDF vehicles approaching. It was now 0045, the new H-Hour, and the mission had become a race between the SF troops and the PDF convoy to see who would take the bridge first.

After the helicopters landed, Major Higgins yelled orders to his men to move up the steep slope and establish the ambush position by the road, but his men had already seized the initiative. The first man on the road looked straight into the headlights of the convoy's lead vehicle (which was already on the bridge) and fired a light anti-tank weapon. He missed, but the next two Special Forces soldiers did not. Then Special Forces gunners armed with squad automatic weapons (SAWs) opened up on the column with automatic weapons fire, and M203 gunners started firing grenades into the column.

With the column halted, the Air Force Combat Controller contacted an AC-130 and directed fire onto the PDF column. The AC-130 responded with devastating fire, forcing the PDF soldiers out of the trucks, and this circling aircraft provided vital intelligence on enemy movements. A second AC-130 was called in, providing additional firepower and surveillance, and the Special Operations Forces successfully repelled all PDF attempts to cross the bridge or the river.

At daybreak, the TF BLACK quick reaction force arrived to reinforce Higgins' element. Major Higgins and his troops controlled the bridge while the quick reaction force under

Major Gilberto Perez cleared the east side of the river. They captured 17 PDF members. The TF BLACK elements returned to Albrook AFB that evening.

The fourth TF BLACK H-Hour mission was to take Panamanian TV Channel 2 off the air. The mission was given to Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) 785, commanded by Captain John M. Custer and augmented by technical experts. At 0050 on 20 December, the eighteen-man team fast roped from two helicopters near the TV broadcasting complex in the mountains northeast of Panama City. The PDF guards fled, the team took control of the complex, and the technical experts disabled the station. By 1500, the team had returned to base.

### Post H-Hour Missions

The first three missions after H-Hour focused on stopping pro-Noriega radio broadcasts. After the invasion began, Radio Nacional's AM and FM stations had begun playing a recording of Manuel Noriega exhorting his followers to fight the Americans. Company C, 3rd Battalion, 7th SFG (A), commanded by Major David E. McCracken, got the mission to silence the radio broadcasts. Thirty-three Company C soldiers deployed in three helicopters and arrived at the Controlaria building, the location of the transmitter and antenna, at 1850 on 20 December.

The security element controlled traffic into and out of the target area. The assault teams fast roped onto the roof. One element blew up the electronic junction boxes controlling the antenna, and the rest of the assault force made its way to the 7th floor where they blew the AM station off the air. The assault teams could not find the FM transmitters.

As soon as the force returned to Albrook AFB, they were briefed on their next target: the FM transmission antenna located on the outskirts of town. Major McCracken and his

19 men launched about 2015, and though conducted after dark with very little planning time, the mission went smoothly. By 2045, the Company C element had destroyed the FM antenna, silencing Radio Nacional.

On 21 December, ODA 785 went back to the TV transmission tower it had disabled the day before and replaced its damaged components. About this time, pro-Noriega forces began intermittent radio broadcasts from this area. On 24 December, the rest of Company B, 3rd Battalion, 7th SFG (A) arrived to reinforce their teammates and to search for the phantom radio station. The large number of Spanish speakers in the company and their long experience in Panama helped them to gain the trust of the locals. On the 25th, local civilians led them to a cache site containing weapons, ammunition, and medical supplies. Following up on information received from Panamanians, a patrol found the PDF's radio transmission site and destroyed it on 29 December.

### "Ma Bell" Missions

During the initial invasion, U.S. forces had captured Panama City, its airport, the areas near the Panama Canal, and Rio Hato, but in the countryside the PDF still had nominal control. PDF forces were scattered throughout the countryside in small garrisons ("cuartels"); no one knew what these PDF forces would do, as each cuartel was on its own. The Americans could have easily crushed these posts, but this would have produced many casualties, destroyed Panamanian villages, and alienated the populace. The U.S. instead developed a strategy of capitulation missions, with American forces contacting the PDF enclaves and offering them the opportunity to surrender before being attacked. Complicating the situation, PDF officers on the "most wanted" list commanded some of the major cuartels.

The ideal capitulation scenario was for the PDF to remain in position and then surrender to the U.S. forces as they spread throughout the countryside. Once the PDF had surrendered, the Americans would separate PDF members into criminals and non-criminals. TF BLACK played a critical role in this capitulation effort, one of its most significant contributions to the success of Operation JUST CAUSE.

Capitulation missions had not been included in the plans for Operation JUST CAUSE, but from 22-31 December, they dominated TF BLACK's activities. The typical method used was to attach a small Special Forces element (with Spanish speakers) to a larger force (either the 7th Infantry Division or the 75th Ranger Regiment) to coordinate the PDF capitulation. The Special Forces commander would call the cuartel commander on the telephone and tell him to put all of his weapons in the arms room, line up all of his men on the parade field, and surrender to the U.S. forces that would arrive shortly. Because of the heavy reliance on telephones, these missions were nicknamed "Ma Bell" operations.

During this ten day period, TF BLACK elements were instrumental in the surrender of 14 cuartels, almost 2,000 troops, and over 6,000 weapons without a single U.S. casualty. Several high-ranking cronies of Manuel Noriega who were on the "most wanted" list were also captured in Ma Bell operations.

After each cuartel capitulated, the task of rebuilding the town began. TF BLACK generally left small Special Forces elements in each town to support the rebuilding process and assist the U.S. conventional forces. The Special Forces soldiers' language skills, cultural awareness, and expertise in low intensity conflict proved invaluable in leading U.S. patrols, coordinating with local officials, gathering information on weapons caches, reestablishing Panamanian police forces, and performing a myriad of other tasks that sped





SOF's language skills helped to stabilize the civilian populace and gather intelligence.

the process of transforming Panama into a more democratic nation. These operations were a textbook example of how Special Forces should be used in low intensity conflict.

In the last days of December 1989 and the first days of January 1990, TF BLACK continued its transition from the combat missions of Operation JUST CAUSE to the stabilization missions of Operation PROMOTE LIBERTY. In order to accomplish its new missions, the Task Force was reinforced by the 2nd Battalion, 7th SFG (A), a Naval Special Warfare Unit, and an Air Force Special Operations Detachment. With the assignment of SOF units from the Air Force and Navy, TF BLACK became Joint Task Force BLACK. The commander and staff from 7th SFG (A) also arrived to take command of the Army Special Operations Forces in Panama as a subordinate of the JTF BLACK commander. The additional Army Special Forces battalion gave JTF BLACK enough personnel to conduct stabilization operations throughout Panama. The Air Force Special Operations assets gave JTF BLACK the transportation to get troops into remote locations and support them once they were out there. The Naval Special Warfare Unit conducted patrols along the coast and

rivers, investigated possible weapons cache sites, and assisted the Panamanians in reestablishing their maritime security force.

### Noriega's Capture

The invasion culminated with Manuel Noriega's apprehension. Although the JSOTF had missed capturing him at H-Hour on 20 December, SOF targeted his known associates and hiding places in Panama; with few places to hide, Noriega sought refuge at the Papal Nunciature on 24 December. JSOTF forces surrounded and isolated the Nunciature and, in conjunction with U.S. State Department and Vatican diplomats, began to negotiate Noriega's surrender. Over the next ten days, JSOTF units kept watch over the Nunciature and maintained order over the large crowds gathering nearby. On the evening of 3 January, shortly after 10,000 anti-Noriega demonstrators had ended a rally outside the Nunciature, the former Panamanian dictator walked out and surrendered to the JSOTF forces.



**Noriega's Capture**  
After his apprehension, SOF remanded the former dictator into the custody of U.S. Marshals.

## JUST CAUSE: SOF Proves Its Worth

On 16 January 1990, Operation JUST CAUSE officially ended, and JTF BLACK ceased to exist. Some JTF BLACK forces returned to the continental United States or to the control of U.S. Southern Command. The rest remained under the control of JTF BLACK headquarters, renamed Joint Special Operations Task Force Panama, and continued PROMOTE LIBERTY operations. Throughout Panama, SOF continued the difficult and delicate task of restoring peace, security, and democratic government to Panama one village at a time.

JUST CAUSE demonstrated just how far SOF had come since Desert One: not only with regard to internal enhancements to SOF capabilities and command and control structures, but also with regard to the manifest close integration of SOF and conventional forces. SOF were subordinate to the Joint Task Force South, so all SOF plans and operations complemented the theater campaign plan. JUST CAUSE clearly validated how SOF were trained, equipped, and organized. This operation showcased joint SOF capabilities, the high training standards for operators and staffs

alike, their quality and professionalism and the value of interoperability procedures. PROMOTE LIBERTY planning, and post-conflict strategy in general, still needed work. In particular, there were problems with integrating nation-building plans into the campaign plan, incorporating CA and PSYOP planning with operational planning, and mobilizing crucial Reserve Component CA and PSYOP forces.

## *Iraq*

### Operation DESERT SHIELD/ DESERT STORM 1990-1991

Iraq invaded Kuwait a few hours before dawn on 2 August 1990, easily overran Kuwaiti forces, and massed along the Saudi Arabian border. While the Saudi forces established a thin defensive cordon along the border, the United States deployed air and ground forces to the Arabian Peninsula to deter further Iraqi aggression. The United States Central Command (CENTCOM) had military responsibility for this area and prepared to reinforce the Saudi Arabian forces. Its special operations component, Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT), likewise prepared to deploy and conduct combat search and rescue operations and other assigned missions.

SOCCENT personnel deployed to Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on 10 August 1990 and moved to King Fahd International Airport (KFIA) on 17 August. Its naval element, the Naval Special Warfare Task Group (NSWTG), arrived in Saudi Arabia on 10 August 1990 and received its second increment of personnel on 9 September 1990. Meanwhile, SOCCENT's Air Force element, AFSOCCENT, established its headquarters at KFIA on 17 August 1990. In late August, the 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) [5th SFG (A)] deployed two battalions to King Khalid Military City (KKMC) and retained the third at KFIA.



Psychological Operations Forces supported JUST CAUSE by disseminating newspapers, leaflets, and radio/TV broadcasts.

Army aviation assets of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment also deployed to KKMCC.

### Coalition Warfare

Coalition warfare (warfighting with forces from more than one nation) was arguably the most important of all the SOCCENT missions. With Saudi concurrence, SOCCENT's first coalition warfare mission was given to NSWTC elements, which deployed to the Kuwait/Saudi Arabian border on 19 August 1990 to provide close air support and to serve as "trip wires" in case of an Iraqi invasion. The 5th SFG (A) began replacing the SEALs on 5 September 1990, and provided early warning, coalition warfare training, and communications for close air support.

The number and type of coalition warfare missions grew steadily throughout DESERT SHIELD and into the early part of DESERT STORM. The Saudis requested more Special Forces teams to train them on the M-60A3 tank, artillery, vehicle maintenance, and in other technical areas. Other allied forces, as they deployed to the Arabian Peninsula, wanted Special Forces to provide close air support and liaison with friendly forces. These increasing requirements for coalition warfare soon absorbed much of the 5th SFG (A).

SOF also trained Saudi naval forces in special warfare. Some Saudis had completed the BUD/S (Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL) training course in Coronado, California, and their commander had worked with SEALs during Operation EARNEST WILL. Instruction, which included combat swimming and leadership training, produced three Saudi SEAL teams. Other NSWTC personnel trained the Saudi high-speed boat operators as well as conventional Saudi naval forces.



Coalition Warfare:

Arab forces training with U.S. Special Forces.

Another NSWTC mission was to reconstitute the Kuwaiti navy. Only two gunboats (*Al Sanbouk* and *Istiglal*), some patrol craft, and a motorized coast guard barge (*Sawahil*) had escaped the Iraqis. In September, the NSWTC began training Kuwaiti naval personnel; they used the *Sawahil* to train 35 Kuwaiti sailors in naval engineering, seamanship, and small weapons. To instruct the Kuwaitis in surface warfare, the NSWTC borrowed rated experts from the conventional U.S. Navy. Beginning in November, the *Sawahil* and its crew conducted joint training with NSWTC small boats and took part in a combat search and rescue exercise with USS *Nicholas*. During DESERT STORM, the *Sawahil* provided an operational platform for coalition forces, including NSWTC Special Boat Unit detachments, Kuwaiti patrol boats, and SEALs.

Coalition warfare training continued until the eve of the ground war. The Arab forces in the east and north faced formidable military obstacles along their projected areas of advance, including multiple Iraqi minefields, "fire trenches," and above-ground pipelines. A Special Forces team worked with a Saudi engineer battalion to plan for clearing invasion lanes through two Iraqi minefields and over an above-ground pipeline inside Kuwait. On 22 February, the Saudi engineers and U.S. Special Forces easily cleared six lanes because the Iraqis, battered for over a month by allied



air power, failed to cover the minefields with artillery fire. In the north, other SF teams worked with the Saudis and the Egyptians to create breaches in the minefields for the passage of their forces. On 25 February, the Egyptians drove into Kuwait against sporadic resistance. The Egyptian corps that the 5th SFG (A) teams supported served as the hinge for CENTCOM's huge turning movement. By the night of 26 February, the Egyptians and their SF advisors had reached their objectives near Kuwait City.

The 28 February cease fire marked the end of most SOCCENT coalition warfare activities. It had been a huge effort, requiring an entire Special Forces Group, SEALs, Special Boat Units, and support elements. SF teams accompanied 109 allied units, from battalion to corps, providing close air support and liaison between forces. SOF eventually trained some 30,000 coalition troops in 44 subject areas.

#### Kuwaiti Reconstitution and Unconventional Warfare

American Special Forces units helped to reconstitute a number of Kuwaiti military forces, both conventional and unconventional. As a result of meetings between the SOCCENT commander, Colonel Jesse Johnson, and the Kuwaiti Armed Forces Chief of Staff, soldiers from the 5th SFG (A) began training Kuwaiti soldiers in mid-September at KKMCC. The initial mission was to form a Kuwaiti SF battalion and a commando brigade, but the training went so well that the mission grew to include four additional Kuwaiti infantry brigades. Eventually, SOF units trained a total of 6,357 Kuwaitis, who formed an SF battalion, a commando brigade, and the Al-Khulud, Al-Haq, Fatah, and Badr infantry brigades. The instruction included weapons training, tactics, staff procedures, close air support, anti-armor operations, and nuclear, chemical and biological defense.

Colonel Johnson also formed a Special Planning Group to conduct specialized unconventional warfare training for selected members of the Kuwaiti military. About a month before the start of the Air War, 17 Kuwaiti military personnel underwent a rigorous five-week training course, but when DESERT STORM's air attack began on 16 January 1991, the Iraqis closed the border, limiting infiltration options. Out of necessity, training then concentrated on infiltration methods.

From 14-20 February 1991, SEALs trained 13 Kuwaitis for a maritime infiltration onto a beach area south of Kuwait City. They conducted a dress rehearsal on 21 February 1991 and attempted infiltrating five Kuwaitis on the next day. SEAL swimmer scouts first reconnoitered the shoreline and then escorted the Kuwaitis to the pier. Unable to link up with the friendly forces, the Kuwaitis signaled for extraction and were picked up about 500 meters from the beach. The mission was aborted, and the SEALs and Kuwaitis returned safely. Post-war examination of the beach revealed undetected beach obstacles and heavier Iraqi troop dispositions than anticipated.

#### Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR)

During DESERT SHIELD, SOCCENT established procedures for CSAR, a mission that planners expected would be of critical importance, given the projected losses of coalition aircraft. Before it would launch a CSAR mission, SOCCENT required a visual parachute sighting and a voice transmission from the downed pilot, as well as enemy threat analysis. SOCCENT conducted full scale CSAR exercises before the Air War started. To support the CSAR mission, SOCCENT established forward operating bases near the Saudi border, close to the projected areas of operation.

The first successful CSAR operation of DESERT STORM occurred on 21 January 1991. An Iraqi missile had shot down a Navy F-14 60 miles northwest of Baghdad, and the pilot had evaded capture. At 0730, an MH-53J Pave Low helicopter launched from Ar Ar in a fog so thick that even when flying at 100 feet, the crew could not see the ground. They flew 130 miles into Iraq but could not contact the pilot—their coordinates for his location were nearly 50 miles off. The helicopter returned to Ar Ar to refuel and launched again at 1200. With better coordinates, the crew arrived at the pilot's location just as an Iraqi truck was descending upon him. The helicopter copilot directed the two A-10 fighter planes flying overhead to "smoke the truck." The A-10s destroyed the truck with cannon fire, and the helicopter picked up the pilot.

The next successful CSAR effort occurred on 23 January when a USAF F-16 pilot bailed out over the gulf. A Navy SH-60B helicopter carrying two SEALs launched from USS *Nicholas* and found the pilot six miles off the Kuwaiti coast. The SEALs jumped into the water and attached a rescue harness to the pilot; the helicopter crew retrieved all three and returned to the *Nicholas* just 35 minutes

after launching. The rescuers reported the mission went "flawlessly" and described the pilot as "cold, but in good condition."

On 17 February 1991, an F-16 went down in southern Iraq 36 miles from the Kuwaiti border. Slightly injured, the pilot parachuted into a heavy concentration of Iraqi troops but still established contact with rescue forces. Two MH-60s from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment launched from Rafha, plucked the pilot from the desert, and returned him directly to KKMCMC for medical treatment.

For a number of reasons, most downed aircrew members were not rescued. The aircrews needed better survival radios, and there were not always visual sightings of open parachutes. Many pilots landed in areas of heavy Iraqi concentrations, and the Iraqis often beat the SOF rescuers to the downed airmen.

#### SPECIAL RECONNAISSANCE (SR)

Special Operations Forces conducted SR missions along the Iraqi border during DESERT SHIELD, providing CENTCOM with timely intelligence and an early warning capability. During the war, SOCCENT's SR efforts supported the ground offensive.

DESERT STORM's first successful CSAR operation:  
Navy Lieutenant Devon Jones running towards an MH-53J Pave Low.





Special Tactics Teams train during DESERT STORM.

SOCCENT forces conducted 12 SR missions during DESERT STORM. One mission included 15 separate near-shore boat operations that the NSWTG conducted in Kuwaiti waters between 30 January and 15 February as part of CENTCOM's deception plan. Another mission encompassed six searches for mines by SEALs in the northern Persian Gulf. Three SR missions continued the early warning network which the SEALs and 5th SFG (A) troops had established with Saudi and Kuwaiti forces during DESERT SHIELD.

At the request of VII Corps, SF teams performed a trafficability survey on 18 February, analyzing the terrain and soil conditions along the Corps' planned invasion route into Iraq. Special operations helicopters inserted teams from the 3rd and 5th SFG (A)s into two sites. The teams included engineers who performed penetrometer tests on the soil, as well as combat camera crews, who used low-level light lenses to take still and video shots of the terrain—which later proved to be the most valuable data collected. The teams executed the missions without incident.

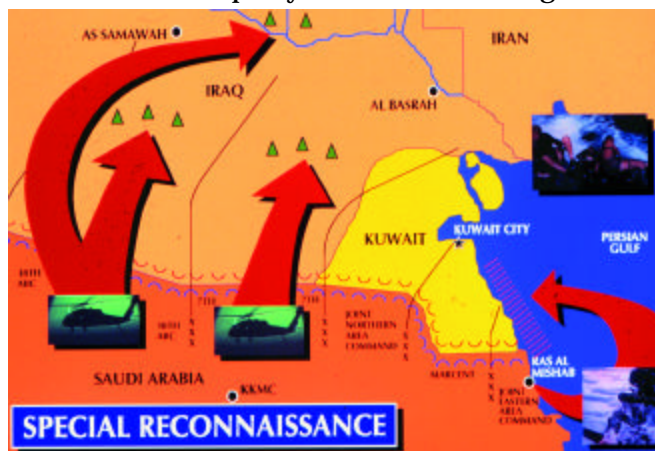
The campaign plan for the ground war called for the XVIII Airborne Corps and VII Corps forces to drive deep into Iraq, flanking and then enveloping the strong Iraqi defenses in Kuwait and southern Iraq. This movement would leave the flanks of both corps vulnerable to counterattack. The corps' commanders requested SOCCENT provide SR teams to go

deep inside Iraq, watch important lines of communication, and look for enemy movement toward the exposed flanks. G-Day was set for 24 February 1991.

Three missions provided ground reconnaissance of the main routes that Iraqi units could use to move into VII Corps' area of operations. Two of the missions successfully infiltrated on 23 February; they reported regularly on enemy activity until advance elements of the 1st Cavalry Division arrived on 27 February. The third team, inserted among Iraqi forces, had to be exfiltrated.

Special Forces launched three other SR missions on 23 February, these in support of the XVIII Airborne Corps. One team landed in the middle of a Bedouin encampment and called for an emergency exfiltration. After being picked up, they scouted the area for an alternate site and saw enemy activity everywhere. Coming under AAA and SAM attack, they aborted the mission. Another team went into the Euphrates River Valley to report on Iraqi military traffic moving along a major highway. During the insertion, one of the aircraft flew so low to avoid Iraqi radar that it tore loose its rear wheel on a sand dune.

By daylight the team was in place, having dug "hide" holes in a drainage canal about 300 meters northwest of Highway 7. To the horror of the hidden Americans, the surrounding fields came alive with people that morning, and they were soon spotted by some Iraqi children and an adult. A party of 25 armed villagers,





joined by an Iraqi Army company, moved toward the team. Calling for close air support and an emergency extraction, the Americans destroyed their classified gear, engaged in a short but hot firefight with the Iraqis, and retreated to better fighting positions. Using their emergency radio, the team contacted close air support aircraft, which dropped cluster munitions and 2,000 pound bombs within 200 meters of the embattled team until nightfall. During one lull in the air strikes, two members of the team charged down the canal and eliminated an Iraqi element. After dark, the team moved 300 meters from the canal, where a helicopter extracted them without further opposition.

Another special reconnaissance mission sent two three-man teams to monitor an area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Communications glitches prevented one team from reporting what they saw, and the team was picked up early on 27 February. The second team's reconnaissance site put it in the midst of Bedouin encampments, so team members established a hide site along a drainage canal. At daylight, they discovered their "hide" site was near a major thoroughfare. Many Bedouins passed by without noticing them, but they were soon compromised by a sharp-eyed little girl. The team fled with armed Bedouins in hot pursuit. Iraqi soldiers soon joined the firefight. The team held off the Iraqis for an hour and a half until F-16s appeared, followed by a 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment Blackhawk. Although riddled by small arms fire, the helicopter made a dramatic daylight rescue of the team.

From 29 January until 16 February, NSWTCG elements conducted nearshore and offshore reconnaissance missions in support of CENTCOM's deception strategy to fix Iraqi attention on a potential amphibious invasion by U.S. Marines. The SR missions resulted in the collection of information, established a naval presence along the Kuwaiti coast, and faked

the initial stages of a possible amphibious invasion. The deception effort culminated in a large-scale operation on the night of 23-24 February 1991, the eve of the ground offensive, which simulated a beach reconnaissance and clearing operation. The deception campaign prevented Iraqi units at the beaches from reinforcing those being attacked in the west.

### Direct Action (DA) Missions

During DESERT STORM, General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, CINCCENT, relied heavily on allied air power to hit targets which otherwise would have been SOF direct action (DA) missions. Even so, SOCCENT executed some critically important DA missions. SOF's first and most important DA mission involved the destruction of two Iraqi early warning radar sites guarding the southwestern approaches to Iraq at the start of the Air War. Neutralizing these sites allowed allied aircraft to fly undetected toward the SCUD complexes in western Iraq.

Colonel Jesse Johnson, the SOCCENT Commander, turned to AFSOCCENT, his Air Force component, to plan the operation. The concept called for MH-53 Pave Low helicopters to guide AH-64 Apaches to the targeted radar sites, which the Apaches would destroy. On 14 October, Colonel Johnson assured General Schwarzkopf that he and AFSOCCENT were 100 percent certain of the success of this mission. The Apache and Pave Low crews quickly worked out interoperability issues, and they conducted a full dress rehearsal in late December with the crews duplicating the formations, routes, bearings, times, and attack tactics. At 1500 on 16 January 1991, SOCCENT informed the Apache/Pave Low task force that the mission was a "go" for that night. H-Hour for the start of the Air War was 0300 on 17 January with the opening helicopter strike beginning at 0238 hours.



MH-53J Pave Lows led the Apaches to the Iraqi radar sites.

The task force consisted of White and Red teams, with two Pave Lows and four Apaches assigned to each one.

At 0058 on 17 January, the White Team lifted off from Al Jouf and headed toward the border, followed 15 minutes later by the Red Team. Flying less than 100 feet off the desert at 100 knots, the two teams avoided detection and safely reached the initial point, approximately 7.5 miles from the targets, where the Pave Lows dropped chemical lights and returned to the rendezvous point north of the border. The Apache pilots updated their navigational and targeting systems, flew toward their targets, and within seconds of the appointed time opened fire on the radar sites. All aircraft returned safely. Colonel Johnson then notified General Schwarzkopf of the mission's success. At the same time, combat control teams



AH-64 Apaches destroyed Iraqi radars prior to H-Hour.

installed radar beacons along the Saudi-Kuwaiti-Iraqi borders to direct allied attack aircraft to the gaps in the early warning radar system. SOF had played a crucial role on the opening night of the Air War.

AFSOCENT conducted two other DA missions. The BLU-82 "Daisy Cutters" were 15,000 pound bombs capable of destroying everything in a three mile radius on the flat desert terrain. Because of the anti-aircraft threat, AFSOCENT planners determined that the bomb should be dropped from 16,000 to 21,000 feet. Accordingly, MC-130E Combat Talons flew five missions and dropped a total of 11 BLU-82s on minefields and Iraqi military positions. These huge bombs cleared wide routes through minefields, and their enormous blast either killed the enemy or acted as a potent psychological operations weapon.



Enormous BLU-82 "Daisy Cutter" bombs had a lethal impact on the Iraqis.

AC-130s flew fire missions in support of ground forces, to attack the SCUD missile sites, and to engage Iraqi troops. Although these aircraft belonged to AFSOCCENT, they were under the operational control of Central Command's air component, CENTAF. This arrangement resulted in the AC-130s being used for inappropriate missions in medium threat areas. After an AC-130H was engaged by SAMs while on a SCUD hunting mission, the AFSOCCENT commander was given mission oversight responsibility to ensure these SOF assets were used correctly.

On 31 January 1991, AFSOCCENT suffered the single worst air loss by any coalition unit when an AC-130H Spectre gunship, "Spirit 03," was shot down while providing fire support to U.S. Marines defending Khafji against an Iraqi attack. Three gunships were airborne that morning over the Marines, and the first two had destroyed numerous Iraqi armored personnel carriers. At 0600, "Spirit 03" was due to end its patrol when it received a call from the Marines, who wanted a missile battery engaged. The crew of "Spirit 03" took out the battery, but as darkness gave way to daylight, a surface-to-air missile hit the aircraft. At 0635, the aircraft sent out a "mayday" distress call and then crashed into the gulf. All 14 crewmembers died.

During DESERT STORM, British Special Operations Forces carried out their own missions in western Iraq. One British mission—very close to Baghdad—included four U.S. SOF (three Special Forces soldiers and one Combat Controller) brought along to coordinate close air support. Their goal was to destroy a buried fiber optic cable supposedly used for SCUD command and control. The 20 Brits and four Americans were inserted by two helicopters on the night of 23 January slightly southwest of Baghdad. Digging teams found and cut several cables, but found no fiber optic cable. They then crammed 800 pounds of explosives into the hole and blew up what was

left of the cables. After 1.5 hours on the ground, the team returned safely to Al Juf by helicopter.

Naval Special Warfare units also had direct action missions. On 18 January 1991, when U.S. helicopters came under fire from seven oil platforms in the Durrah oil field, NSWTCG elements counterattacked. SEALs boarded and cleared each of the seven platforms, capturing prisoners, weapons, and documents. Eight Special Boat Unit personnel and 32 Kuwaiti Marines also seized Qaruh Island on 8 February, Maradim Island the next day, and Kubbar Island on 14 February—these operations marked the first reclamation of Kuwaiti territory. In the final hours of the war, NSWTCG and Kuwaiti forces seized Bubiyan Island and captured its Iraqi defenders. SEALs also flew aboard Navy helicopters for both CSAR and countermine missions, during which they destroyed 26 moored or floating mines.

#### THE LIBERATION OF KUWAIT CITY: OPERATION URBAN FREEDOM

SOCCENT assisted Kuwaiti forces in liberating their capital city and reestablishing Kuwaiti governmental authority. SOCCENT initiated Operation URBAN FREEDOM when allied forces reached the outskirts of



SOCCENT planning to liberate the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait City.



Kuwait City. SOCCENT deployed to Kuwait City International Airport on 27 February, along with 3rd SFG (A) teams and other personnel. Surprisingly, the Iraqis had abandoned the city, and the liberation forces met little organized opposition. As a precautionary measure, SOF units conducted a “take down” of the U.S. Embassy compound in Kuwait City. A ground convoy, composed of SEAL fast attack vehicles and 3rd SFG (A) soldiers, surrounded the compound while a Special Forces assault force fast roped onto the roofs of buildings and searched for Iraqis and booby traps. None were found.

### SCUD Hunting

Coalition forces had air superiority in the skies over Iraq and Kuwait from the war’s first air strikes on 17 January 1991. Unable to do battle in the air, Saddam Hussein struck back with a clumsy, unsophisticated weapon—the SCUD missile—which he ordered to be launched at Israel. Tactically, the SCUD would not have a major impact, but its strategic effect was felt on 18 January when seven SCUDs hit Israeli cities. If continued attacks brought Israel into the war, then the Coalition aligned against Saddam might crumble. General Schwarzkopf’s insistence that the SCUD was not a significant military weapon did little to placate the Israelis or ease the pressure on the Bush Administration. By the end of the first week of the war, over 30 SCUDs had been launched at targets in Israel and Saudi Arabia. The air campaign was not working fast enough to eradicate the mobile SCUD launchers.

By the end of January, the diplomatic pressure on the Bush Administration was such that General Powell ordered General Schwarzkopf to use Special Operations Forces to hunt SCUDs and stop them from being fired at Israel. A Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF), made up of special operations air and ground units, arrived in Saudi Arabia by 1 February. Operating from a base at Ar Ar



SCUD hunting patrol in western Iraq.

in western Saudi Arabia, the JSOTF had a daunting mission: stop the SCUD attacks on Israel. Reconnaissance and surveillance teams would have to go hundreds of miles inside western Iraq to destroy the SCUD infrastructure.

The first JSOTF cross-border mission, consisting of 16 SOF personnel and two vehicles, occurred on 7 February. It set the pattern for subsequent cross-border operations. Armed Blackhawks, called defensive armed penetrators, accompanied the insertions. Once on the ground, the teams hid during the day and conducted reconnaissance at night. These SOF operations proved to be so successful—especially the Blackhawk attacks on SCUDs and SCUD-related targets—that on 14 February General Schwarzkopf approved



MH-60 zeroes in on SCUD launcher.



General Schwarzkopf thanks  
SCUD hunters at Ar Ar.

augmenting the JSOTF with a reinforced Ranger company and more 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment helicopters.

By the time the ground war started, the JSOTF was conducting a wide range of operations. As many as four SOF teams at a time were inside Iraq, conducting operations against the SCUD complexes. These teams called in F-15E, F-16, and A-10 sorties to strike the targets they found. On 26 February, SOF attacked a radio relay site: first, AH-6 attack helicopters peppered the radio relay compound with mini-gun and rocket fire; Rangers then secured the compound and set charges to destroy the 100-meter tall tower. The Blackhawks also conducted “Thunder Runs,” direct action missions on SCUDs, their lines of communication, and other command and control facilities. The JSOTF also used “Gator” minefields to limit SCUD mobile launcher movement. Because of JSOTF operations, the number of SCUD launches fell dramatically, and their accuracy was greatly impaired.

#### PSYOP and CA Missions

Psychological Operations (PSYOP) and Civil Affairs (CA) units contributed significantly to the success of the Gulf War. The PSYOP campaign was directed toward individual units and soldiers, and stressed a

single theme: the coalition’s quarrel was with Saddam Hussein and not with the Iraqi people or its army. In the early phases, the PSYOP themes emphasized “peace and brotherhood;” it later evolved to stronger themes, and finally turned to surrender appeals and threats. Once begun, the PSYOP campaign (in conjunction with sustained air attacks) steadily eroded Iraqi morale. Resistance crumbled quickly when the coalition ground forces attacked. A total of 86,743 Iraqis were taken prisoner, and most of them possessed surrender leaflets when they capitulated. Some 29 million leaflets were dropped from a variety of aircraft, with a few more distributed by artillery shells and balloons. Three AM and two FM ground stations transmitted “Voice of the Gulf” broadcasts for 72 days, which interspersed 3,200 news items and 189 PSYOP “messages” among sports and music programs.

The Combined Civil Affairs Task Force (CCATF) was created in February 1991 to provide emergency services for Kuwait City once it was liberated. Relief operations began on 28 February 1991 when the first convoy rolled into the city. The CCATF stayed in Kuwait City for two months before turning the relief effort over to the Army Corps of Engineers. During that time it distributed 12.8



Civil Affairs soldiers distributed food  
and supplies to hungry, displaced people.



million liters of water, 12,500 tons of food, 1,250 tons of medicine, 750 vehicles, and 245 electrical generators.

Flexibility best describes Special Operations Forces' contribution to the DESERT STORM victory. Initially tasked with providing CSAR, SOCCENT steadily expanded its missions as conventional commanders gained confidence in SOF's unique abilities and resources. The coalition support mission became an important new SOF capability, used later in operations in Somalia and Bosnia; the new geopolitical environment had made SOF more relevant. The SCUD hunting mission demonstrated SOF's ability to deploy rapidly and start operations with little delay, and to execute missions of the gravest national importance.

### ***El Salvador***

1981-1992

In January 1981, the FMLN (Farabundo Marti Liberacion Nacional) launched their "final offensive" to overthrow the El Salvadoran government. Its failure drove the insurrection into the countryside. The U.S. SOF roles in countering the insurrection began with a low-key survey mission in 1981 to assess the security of U.S. interests in that country.

The U.S. Army began training El Salvadoran units, starting with the Atlacatl Immediate Reaction Battalion (IRB) in 1981, that was trained by a Mobile Training Team (MTT) from 3rd Battalion, 7th Special Forces Group (A). Another battalion (Ramon Belloso) was trained by Special Forces personnel at Fort Bragg the following year. In 1983, the United States established a Regional Military Training Center (RMTC) in Honduras to train Salvadoran units, and teams from the 7th SFG (A) rotated through the RMTC to conduct training in marksmanship, communications, first aid, patrolling, small unit tactics and a host of other basic skills. Next, U.S. advisers began to train El Salvadoran

forces in their own country. Beside of these efforts, the El Salvadoran Army expanded from 8,000 men before 1980 to a hard-hitting force of 54,000 by 1987.

At the same time, Naval Special Warfare (NSW) worked with the El Salvadoran Navy to set up SEAL teams, using the "train the trainer" concept. One four-man MTT also trained garrison troops to act as the guard force.

Special Forces advisors also went to each of the six brigade headquarters where they lived (generally no more than 2-3 officers and NCOs), worked and trained with brigade soldiers for six months to a year. With a limit of 55 advisors, a single officer or NCO was assigned to some sites, thus making close cooperation with his El Salvadoran counterparts a matter of life or death because of frequent guerrilla (known as "Gs") attacks. In the most publicized incident, the "Gs" attacked the headquarters of the 4th Infantry Brigade in El Paraiso, Chalatenango. The 31 March 1987, attack killed 64 El Salvadoran soldiers and wounded 79. A soldier from the 3rd Battalion, 7th SFG (A), SFC Gregory A. Fronius, was killed while attempting to organize the resistance to the attack. In 1988 during a similar attack on the 4th Brigade cuartel, El Salvadoran forces and U.S.



SFC Gregory A. Fronius, shown here training a Salvadoran soldier in marksmanship, was later killed in a FMLN raid.



advisors—Major James Parker, SSG Michael Roth, Captain Gilberto Aguiar, SFC Mario Orozco-Torres and 1LT Byron Castleman—fought back and secured the camp by dawn.

The professional training imparted to the El Salvadoran military led to ultimate success on the battlefield. On 16 January 1992, the FMLN signed peace accords with the government. U.S. advisors can take no small measure of pride in their role in neutralizing the armed forces of the FMLN and forcing them to join the national political process. In 1996, Congress ordered the Pentagon to give Armed Forces Expeditionary Medals to all who served in El Salvador from January 1981 to February 1992. This allowed for other combat awards, including the Silver Star, Bronze Star, Combat Infantry Badge, Army Commendation Medal for Valor, and the Combat Medical Badge to be awarded to soldiers who served in El Salvador.

## ***Somalia***

1992-1995

Special Operations Forces first became involved in Somalia as part of Operation PROVIDE RELIEF. In August 1992, soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) deployed to Kenya to provide security for relief flights. They formed an airborne reaction force, which included two desert mobility vehicles loaded inside C-130 aircraft. The C-130s circled over Somali airstrips during delivery of relief supplies. In addition, SOF medics and ground observers accompanied many relief flights into the airstrips throughout southern Somalia to conduct general area assessments. In many cases, they were the first U.S. soldiers in Somalia,



arriving before U.S. forces who supported the expanded relief operations of RESTORE HOPE.

## **OPERATION RESTORE HOPE**

To support the United Nation's relief effort in Somalia, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, directed CENTCOM on 2 December 1992 to secure transportation facilities in Mogadishu, Somalia. The operation was designated RESTORE HOPE. An amphibious squadron, consisting of USS *Tripoli*, *Juneau*, and *Rushmore*, with a Marine Expeditionary Unit, a SEAL platoon, and a Special Boat Unit (SBU) detachment, arrived off the coast of Somalia shortly thereafter. To mount an amphibious landing to secure the Mogadishu airport, the Marines needed up-to-date charts for the beaches—charts which did not yet exist. The SEALs and SBU detachment conducted a hydrographic reconnaissance, the classic “frogman mission” of World War II, to map the beaches.

The first mission occurred on the night of 6 December, when 12 SEALs conducted a hydrographic reconnaissance in the traditional method, swimming in a line toward shore, and taking depth soundings with weighted lines. Upon reaching waist deep water, they each shifted to the right and swam back out, repeating the process. Meanwhile, another five SEALs swam ashore and reconnoitered the beach. The two SEAL cartographers measured the berm and noted the shore gradient and the presence of obstacles on the beach. The SEALs returned to the *Juneau* where they compiled charts, briefed the Marines, and prepared for their next night's mission.

On the night of 7 December, the SEALs swam into Mogadishu harbor, where they found suitable landing sites, assessed the area for threats, and ascertained that the port could support maritime prepositioned ship offloads. This was a tough mission: the SEALs swam

against a strong current which left many of them overheated and exhausted. Furthermore, they had to swim through raw sewage in the harbor, which made them sick.

When the first SEALs hit the shore the following night, they were surprised to meet members of the news media. Thankfully, the first Marines came ashore soon thereafter, and the press corps redirected their attention to them, freeing the SEALs to proceed with their duties. Four SEALs thereupon conducted surf observations and initial terminal guidance for the Marines' landing craft.

On 17 December, the SEALs surveyed the port of Kismayu from the French frigate *Dupleix*. During this operation, Somali snipers fired at the SEALs, but no SEALs were hit. Later, the SEALs provided personal security for President George Bush during a visit to Somalia and provided snipers to the Marines. Before leaving Somalia in February 1993, the SEALs also conducted joint training missions with Indian naval commandos.

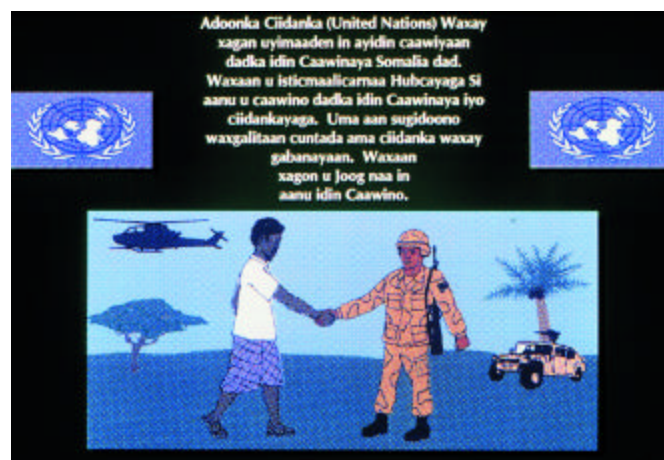
A platoon from SEAL Team 2, with the *Wasp* Amphibious Ready Group, replaced the departed SEALs. On their first mission, these SEALs reconnoitered the Jubba River (a mission which included dodging crocodiles) to gather intelligence on gun smuggling. Based on this information, Marines staged two raids on towns along the river. These SEALs performed many operations in April and May: a predawn shore reconnaissance of Kismayu; clearing a potential beach landing site south of Mogadishu; reconnaissance missions in the Three Rivers region south of Kismayu and at Koyaama Island; and a reconnaissance of Daanai beach in extremely rough seas.

Meanwhile, on 28 December 1992, the Special Forces assets in Kenya moved to Somalia and joined Operation RESTORE HOPE. On 12 January 1993, a Special Forces headquarters unit [FOB 52 (-)] deployed to Mogadishu as the Joint Special Operations Forces-Somalia (JSOFOR) that would

command and control all special operations for RESTORE HOPE. JSOFOR's mission was to make initial contact with indigenous factions and leaders; provide information for force protection; and provide area assessments for future relief and security operations. The Special Forces under JSOFOR supported the nine humanitarian relief sector commanders. Before redeploying in April, JSOFOR elements drove over 26,000 miles, captured 277 weapons, and destroyed over 45,320 pounds of ordnance. So successful were the Special Forces teams, the commander of UN operations in Somalia, LTG Bir (Turkey), considered them a "must have" asset.

The 96th CA Battalion (Airborne) deployed a CA Tactical Support Team and six CA Direct Support Teams which provided a liaison between Army and Marine commanders, local Somali committees, and representatives of over 40 non-governmental organizations. CA personnel also staffed humanitarian operations centers throughout Somalia, from which they coordinated medical and engineer civic action projects.

The Joint PSYOP Task Force (JPOTF) supported unified operations by integrating PSYOP into all plans and operations, and by hiring more than 30 Somalis to help with the PSYOP newspaper *Rajo* ("Truth") and radio broadcasting. More than seven million copies



Over 7 million leaflets were distributed during RESTORE HOPE.

of 37 different leaflets and a dozen handbills and posters were printed and disseminated. PSYOP soldiers, including eight loudspeaker support teams from the 9th PSYOP Battalion, with native linguists and pre-recorded tapes, supported both the Marine 7th Regimental Combat Support Team and Army maneuver units.

As a complement to *Rajo*, the JPOTF established a radio station in the U.S. Embassy compound, which broadcast a 45-minute Somali language program twice a day. The station featured religious, news, entertainment, and music programs; its broadcasts eventually reached every city and town in Somalia where UN forces were based.

Operation RESTORE HOPE gave way to UN Operations Somalia in May 1993, after having brought an end to starvation and making the lives of Somalis somewhat safer. But the overall success of U.S. Special Operations Forces in Somalia will always be overshadowed by the events of 3-4 October 1993, when U.S. troops found themselves in the fiercest urban firefight since the Vietnam War.

## UNOSOM II

On 5 June 1993, General Mohamed Farah Aided's Somalia National Alliance forces ambushed and killed 24 Pakistani soldiers assigned to UN Operations Somalia (UNOSOM II). The next day, General Joseph P. Hoar, Commander in Chief, U.S. Central Command, asked the Joint Staff to send four AC-130 gunships to carry out air strikes against the Somalis. Four AFSOC gunships deployed on 7 June and remained until 14 July, flying a total of 32 interdiction, reconnaissance, and PSYOP missions in support of UNOSOM II. Eight of those missions were combat sorties flown over the streets of Mogadishu between 11-17 June. As part of the initial strike against Aided, three gunships flew over Mogadishu on 11 June and used their 105mm and 40mm cannons to demolish two weapons storage facilities, an armored tank compound, and

Aided's "Radio Mogadishu" propaganda station. The next day, two AC-130s obliterated a second radio station and a weapons factory. On 13, 14, and 17 June, AFSOC crews flew single AC-130 missions that concentrated on destroying weapons storage areas and vehicle compounds belonging to Aided and his key supporters. During these missions, Air Force special tactics operators provided target guidance. The AC-130 missions and related ground operations together drove Aided into hiding. The AC-130s redeployed in mid-July, and other SOF later took up the hunt for Aided.

## TASK FORCE RANGER

On 22 August 1993, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin directed the deployment of a Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF) to Somalia in response to attacks made by Aided supporters upon U.S. and UNOSOM forces and installations. The JSOTF, named Task Force (TF) RANGER, was directed to capture Aided and his key lieutenants and turn them over to UNOSOM II forces. This was a challenging mission, for Aided had gone underground in June, after several AC-130 air raids and UNOSOM II ground assaults on his strongholds.

The command and control structure of TF RANGER still remains of interest. Per the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act, the unified commander (in this case, General Hoar, Commander in Chief, U.S. Central Command) was entitled to organize his forces as he saw fit. General Hoar had the TF RANGER commander, Major General William Garrison, report to him directly. Thus, TF RANGER did not fall under the UNOSOM II commander, and at all times TF RANGER remained under U.S. operational command and control. Major General Garrison did, however, coordinate



TF RANGER operations with Major General Thomas M. Montgomery, the commander of U.S. Forces Somalia.

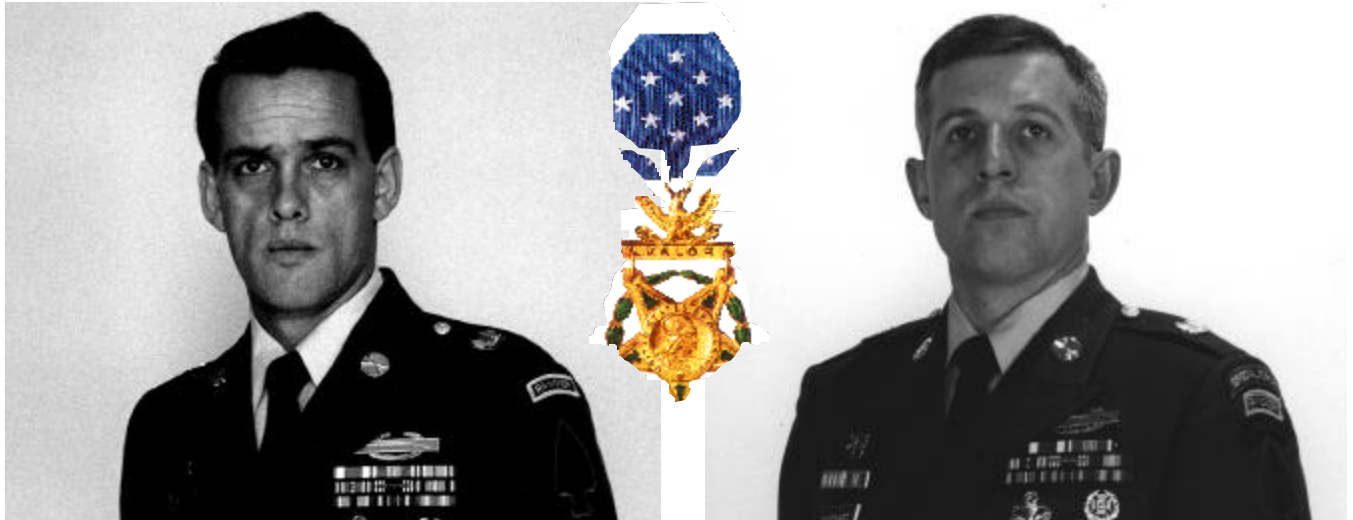
By 28 August, the task force had arrived in country, was conducting training exercises, and was setting up the necessary liaison and communications networks. TF RANGER was made up of special operations ground forces, special operations helicopters, Air Force special tactics personnel, and SEALs. During August and September 1993, the task force conducted six missions into Mogadishu, all of which were tactical successes. They ran these missions both by day and at night, and used both helicopters and vehicles to reach their targets. Although Aideed remained free, the cumulative effect of these missions limited his movements.

On 3 October, TF RANGER launched its seventh mission, this time into Aideed's stronghold to capture two of his key lieutenants. Helicopters carrying assault and blocking forces launched at 1532 from the TF RANGER compound at Mogadishu airport, with a ground convoy moving out three minutes later. By 1542, the ground forces had arrived at the target location, as the blocking force was setting up perimeter positions and the assault force was searching the compound for Aideed's supporters.

These forces came under increasingly heavy enemy fire, more intense than during previous raids. The assault team had captured 24 Somalis and was about to load them onto the convoy trucks when a MH-60 Blackhawk was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) and

Rangers taking cover and returning fire during the 3-4 October battle.





**MSG Gary Gordon**

**SFC Randall Shughart**

These soldiers died defending a crashed MH-60 crew and were awarded the Medal of Honor.

crashed about three blocks from the target location. Almost immediately, one six-man element of the blocking force, as well as an MH-6 assault helicopter and an MH-60 carrying a 15-man combat search and rescue (CSAR) team, began rushing to the scene. The MH-6 crew got there first and, amid a firefight, evacuated two wounded soldiers to a military field hospital. Next, the six-man blocking element arrived, followed by the CSAR helicopter. As the last two members of the CSAR team were sliding down the fast ropes, their helicopter was also hit by an RPG, but somehow the pilot kept the helicopter steady while the two reached the ground safely and then nursed the helicopter back to the airport.

The situation only worsened. Ground fire struck two more MH-60s, with one crashing less than a mile to the south of the first downed helicopter. A Somali mob overran this second site and, despite a heroic defense, killed everyone except the pilot, whom they took prisoner. Two defenders of this crash site, MSG Gary Gordon and SFC Randall Shughart, were posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. The other MH-60 was hit broadside by an RPG, but the crew somehow coaxed it to the new port area where they did a controlled crash landing.

Meanwhile, after loading the detainees on the ground convoy trucks, the assault and blocking forces moved on foot to the first crash area, passing through heavy fire that wounded a number of soldiers, and occupied buildings south and southwest of the downed helicopter. They established defensive positions, laid down suppressive fire to hold the Somalis at bay, treated their wounded, and worked to free the pilot's body from the wreckage.

With the detainees loaded on trucks, the ground convoy force attempted to reach the first crash site from the north. Unable to find it amongst the narrow, winding alleyways, the convoy came under withering small arms and RPG fire. The convoy had to return to base after suffering numerous casualties, losing two 5-ton trucks, and sustaining substantial damage to the other vehicles. On the way back to base, this convoy encountered a second convoy that had left the airport in hopes of reaching the second crash site.

The second group loaded casualties into its vehicles and escorted the first convoy back to base. About this time, the mission's quick reaction force (a company of the 10th Mountain Division in support of UNOSOM II) also tried to reach the second crash site. This force too was pinned by Somali fire and

required the fire support of two AH-6 helicopters before it could break contact and make its way back to the base.

The TF RANGER soldiers at the first crash site were resupplied from a helicopter that evening. Reinforcements, consisting of Rangers, 10th Mountain Division soldiers, SEALs, and Malaysian armored personnel carriers, finally arrived at 0155 on 4 October. The combined force worked until dawn to free the pilot's body, receiving RPG and small arms fire throughout the night.

All the casualties were loaded onto the armored personnel carriers, and the remainder of the force moved out on foot. With the armored personnel carriers providing rolling cover, the run-and-gun movement, known as the "Mogadishu mile," began at 0542. Somalis continued firing at the convoy, but the Rangers only sustained minor wounds. AH-6 gunships raked the cross streets with fire to support the movement. The main force of the convoy arrived at the Pakistani Stadium at 0630. Medical personnel gave emergency treatment to the wounded, and all personnel were prepared for movement to the hospital or the airfield.

Thus ended one of the bloodiest and fiercest urban firefights since the Vietnam War. A total of 16 members of TF RANGER were killed on 3-4 October and 83 wounded (the 10th Mountain Division suffered 22 wounded and two killed). Various estimates placed Somali casualties above 1,000. All told during their time in Somalia, TF RANGER experienced a total of 17 killed in action and 106 wounded. Task force members had to operate in an extremely difficult environment which required constant innovation, flexibility, and sound judgment. The task force had more than held its own against a vastly superior enemy that was battle-hardened from years of civil war and urban fighting.

## The Withdrawal From Somalia

In the aftermath of the 3-4 October battle, U.S. military presence in Somalia increased significantly. Two AC-130s deployed to Kenya and flew reconnaissance missions over Mogadishu. More Special Forces also deployed as did a platoon from SEAL Team 2 and one from SEAL Team 8.

The SEALs provided security detachments to U.S. and UN troops by occupying sniper positions and guarding allied encampments, by flying on aircraft traveling between Somalia and the carrier battle groups off shore, and by providing VIP protection. Other SEALs aboard rigid inflatable boats provided harbor security for Marine Corps landing boats shuttling between ships offshore and Marine Corps encampments on the beach. Most U.S. forces pulled out of Somalia by 25 March 1994.

To assist the UN forces' withdrawal, the final amphibious ready group arrived off Somalia on 5 February 1995, carrying a platoon from SEAL Team 5. During February and March 1995, the SEALs first conducted hydrographic reconnaissance missions on the beaches around Mogadishu to determine the best evacuation routes, and then performed initial terminal guidance for Marine landing craft and assault vehicles. The SEALs maintained security on the evacuation route, conducting anti-sniper patrols on the beach flanks and around the harbor. Operation UNITED SHIELD, the withdrawal from Somalia, was completed on 3 March 1995.

SOF had made major contributions to the Somalia 1992-1995 operations. They conducted reconnaissance and surveillance operations; assisted with humanitarian relief; conducted combat operations; protected American forces; and conducted riverine patrols. Additionally, they ensured the safe landing of the Marines and safeguarded the arrival of merchant ships carrying food.



## ***Haiti***

1994-1995

Haiti had endured unremitting political oppression for hundreds of years. Although the people of this troubled country enjoyed a taste of freedom in 1990 when they elected Jean-Bertrand Aristide as their President, the army took control in a 30 September 1991 coup. Attempting to reestablish the Aristide government, the UN imposed economic sanctions on 23 June 1993; four months later, on October 15, President Clinton ordered U.S. Navy ships to help enforce this embargo. Admiral David Paul Miller, Commander in Chief, United States Atlantic Command (CINCLACOM), activated Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) 120 to plan and execute the multinational Operation SUPPORT DEMOCRACY.

### **Operation SUPPORT DEMOCRACY**

The U.S. and allied warships in CJTF 120 boarded over 600 ships during the operation's first five months. The effectiveness of the big ships soon forced the smugglers into using small vessels to carry contraband along shallow coastal routes beyond the warships' reach.

CJTF 120 selected the *Cyclone* class patrol craft (PC) as the best response to the smugglers' new tactic. The PCs were new to



USS *Cyclone* (left) and the *Bellatrix*, a Dominican Republic patrol boat, enforced the UN-approved embargo of Haiti in 1994.



SEALs in a rigid inflatable boat (RIB) approach a possible smuggler.

USSOCOM's inventory, and needed sea duty certification before assignment to Haiti. After being certified for participating in exercise Agile Provider, USS *Cyclone* and USS *Tempest* departed for Guantanamo, Cuba, on 24 May to participate in SUPPORT DEMOCRACY.

On 30 May, CJTF 120 directed the PCs to begin operations with the warships off the north Haitian coast. The plan to integrate the PCs gradually into the interdiction operation ended when the ships encountered a Bahamian sailing vessel trying to skirt the embargo on their very first voyage. As the vessel headed for Port-au-Prince, the *Cyclone* ordered it to stand clear of the Haitian coast, but the vessel did not heave to until *Cyclone* fired warning flares and launched a rigid inflated boat (RIB) with SEALs aboard. The vessel attempted to play a waiting game that night, but at first light a combined party from the *Cyclone* and the HMCS *Terra Nova*—six Canadians and three SEALs—conducted a boarding and search operation. They found embargoed goods, and the *Cyclone* towed this vessel to Guantanamo.

By 23 June 1994, the CJTF 120 fleet had boarded over 1,100 ships, but embargoed goods flowed steadily into Haiti from the Dominican Republic. General John M. Shalikashvili, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, approved the PCs conducting patrols with Dominican Republic ships. On 11 July 1994, SEALs from the *Cyclone* boarded and cleared the *Vinland Saga*, a Danish vessel carrying a cargo of wheat flour. CJTF 120 directed *Cyclone* and *Tempest* to patrol the

inner areas of the coast. These operations provided an opportunity to check sea traffic and collect information. USS *Hurricane* and USS *Monsoon* patrol craft replaced the *Cyclone* and *Tempest* in September.

Because of the continuing political repression in Haiti, the Clinton Administration sought UN Security Council approval for an invasion and occupation of Haiti if the sanctions failed to restore Aristide to the presidency. The council granted its approval on 31 July 1994. The invasion plan had two phases: first, a 15,000 multinational force would invade, restore public order, and reinstate Aristide; subsequently, 6,000 UN forces would train a new Haitian police force to maintain order.

Accordingly, Army, Air Force, and Navy SOF supported the XVIII Airborne Corps in planning for a full scale invasion of Haiti. The special operations portion of the plan envisioned the takedown of key governmental sites followed by a link-up with conventional forces, similar to what SOF had done for the invasion of Panama in 1989. After the main takedown, Special Forces teams were to secure the countryside. To serve as the SOF mobility and launching platform, an aircraft carrier, USS *America*, was added to the force package in spring 1994. PSYOP played a role in this operation as well. The 193rd SOW's EC-130Es transmitted radio broadcast of recorded programs that covered all of Haiti. These themes stressed national reconciliation and restoration of democracy to the Haitians.



Special Operations helicopters aboard USS *America* off the Haitian coast.



## Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY

On 10 September 1994, the administration authorized General Shalikashvili to execute Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY within the next ten days. On the night of 16-17 September 1994, SEALs conducted a pre-invasion reconnaissance of the coastline along Cap Haitien, collecting intelligence and hydrographic data on potential landing sites for the Marines. The SEALs conducted their missions despite the large number of small vessels and Haitians on the beach. The water was thick with traffic, strewn with garbage, and the SEALs heard Haitians beating drums on the shore. The teams met with varying degrees of success, as there were just too many civilians in some areas to permit a full reconnaissance. Nevertheless, the ensuing landings, which proceeded flawlessly (and uncontested) on the morning of 21 September 1994, verified the accuracy of the SEALs' work.

As the deadline for invasion neared, SOF moved their equipment and supplies to their air and sea ports of embarkation. Rangers, SEALs, and Special Operations aviation assets went aboard USS *America*. Other Rangers moved to their waiting planes, prepared for an airborne assault. All the elements of a complex plan were in place.

Before the American forces invaded Haiti, however, former President Jimmy Carter, Senator Sam Nunn, and retired General Colin Powell successfully brokered a last-minute deal with the Haitian military. Because of these negotiations, all the forces moving toward Haiti on 18 September 1994 were either aborted, diverted, or reconfigured for a peaceful entry. The invasion thus became a large-scale humanitarian mission, with the U.S. forces landing on 19 September. SEALs provided beach security and terminal guidance to the Marine landing forces. The *Monsoon* had the honor of being the first U.S. ship to enter Port-

au-Prince Harbor on 19 September. From this point until their departure on 24 October 1994, the PCs maintained harbor patrols.

## The Occupation of Haiti

U.S. planners foresaw that Port-au-Prince would be the "center of gravity" for the political and economic struggle that would follow the restoration of the Aristide government. The bulk of the conventional forces from the 10th Mountain Division (and later the 25th Infantry Division) secured and remained in the city. It was also important to maintain stable conditions in the remaining 90 percent of Haiti. For this mission, XVIII Airborne Corps Commander Lieutenant General Henry H. Shelton chose to use SOF.

Brigadier General Richard Potter formed Joint Task Force (JTF) RALEIGH as the Joint Special Operations Task Force under Lieutenant General Shelton. To implement the plan, the three battalions of 3rd SFG (A) set up three forward operating bases; 1st Battalion at Les Cayes, 2nd at Camp D'Application, and 3rd at Gonaives. Using the "hub and spoke" concept of employment, Operational Detachment-Alpha teams ("A-teams") deployed initially to the forward operating bases (the hubs) and then farther out into the



BG Potter, Commander JTF Raleigh, on a crowded Haitian street.





PSYOP loudspeaker teams supported pacification efforts in Haiti by making public announcements.

countryside (the spokes). SF teams in these villages became the only source of law and order, and the villagers called on SF captains, sergeants, and warrant officers to act as policeman, judge, and jury for a wide variety of disputes.

A well thought out psychological operations campaign orchestrated by the Joint Psychological Operations Task Force (JPOTF), prepared the way for 3rd SFG (A)'s expansion into the countryside of Haiti. The PSYOP campaign, conducted by elements of the 4th Psychological Operations Group, stressed that cooperating with U.S. forces and avoiding bloody conflicts with the existing illegal regime would lead to the reinstatement of the popular Aristide and the establishment of a working democracy. Using leaflets, radio broadcasts,



Civil Affairs soldiers helped to rebuild Haiti—shown here making a village's well water drinkable.

and airborne loudspeaker platforms, JPOTF soldiers blanketed the countryside with their messages, to great effect. In village after village, the Haitians greeted SOF soldiers with open arms.

While Special Forces soldiers were gaining control over the countryside, Civil Affairs teams from the 96th CA Battalion, augmented by CA reservists, assessed Haiti's creaking infrastructure. The hope was that a new Haitian government, assisted by USAID and various non-governmental organizations and private organizations, would lift the country up from its endemic chaos and poverty. U.S. soldiers from Company A, 96th CA Battalion conducted operation LIGHT SWITCH in Jeremie, Cap Haitien, and other northern cities and towns, restoring electricity to those areas for the first time in years.

SOF operations were notable as a large-scale peacekeeping mission. Even after the UN Mission took over on 31 March 1995 (UPHOLD DEMOCRACY became RESTORE DEMOCRACY), SOF still performed this vital mission. The peace and order found in the Haitian countryside were a remarkable tribute to SOF, who fulfilled all of their mission requirements and more. In addition, the PCs demonstrated their versatility during both SUPPORT DEMOCRACY and UPHOLD DEMOCRACY; they proved their usefulness in coastal operations and showed they could support both SEALs and Special Boat Unit operations.

## ***Balkans Operations***

Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1995-Present

In the early 1990s, rival ethnic states within Yugoslavia declared their independence and used force to align their borders to encompass all their ethnic population in neighboring states. The intensity of the fighting and "ethnic cleansing" shocked the UN and NATO into action. From 1992 to 1995, both of these

organizations sent forces to the region to force a peace settlement in the former Yugoslavia. But, not until NATO aircraft bombed Bosnian Serb targets (Operation DELIBERATE FORCE, August-September 1995) did the warring factions agree to a cease fire in October. This cease fire, in turn, led to the Dayton Peace Accords (21 November 1995) and the Paris peace agreement (14 December 1995).

### Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR

For Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR (December 1995-December 1996), the implementation of the peace agreement, NATO's missions included peace enforcement (separating the warring factions, establishing demilitarized zones, and maintaining security) and support for the withdrawal of UN forces from the former Yugoslavia. NATO vested command and control in the Commander in Chief, Implementation Force, and his assigned forces, known as the Implementation Force (IFOR).

Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR) initially became involved in these peace efforts in February 1993 when it established the Joint Special Operations Task Force 2 (JSOTF2). Located at San Vito Air Station, near Brindisi, Italy, JSOTF2 had the following missions: combat search and rescue; fire support; and visit, board, search and seizure. To support the 1995 peace agreement, SOCEUR provided forces to establish the Special Operations Command Implementation Force (SOCIFOR) and superimposed it over JSOTF2 at San Vito. SOCIFOR had several missions, but its most notable one was to provide SOF to the NATO and non-NATO forces in Bosnia. Like DESERT STORM and Somalia before, the emphasis was on SOF's capabilities to interact with foreign military forces. Other missions included personnel recovery and fire support.

All SOF "in the box" (inside of Bosnia-Herzegovina) were assigned to Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF), the SOF component to the land forces component, Commander, Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps (COMARRC). A British officer commanded the CJSOTF with an American SOF officer as his deputy. Beneath the CJSOTF, SOCIFOR established a U.S. SOF headquarters (known as FOB 101) using 1st Battalion, 10th SFG (A) assets.

Each of COMARRC's three divisions [called multinational divisions (MNDs)] had a Special Operations Command and Control Element (SOCCE) assigned, which worked for the division commanders, controlled SOF in the divisions' areas, and reported to FOB 101. The SOCCE coordinated SOF activities with the conventional forces; advised the division commander on SOF capabilities and employment options; and provided secure and reliable communications (this last capability was so critical that COMARRC would have delayed the transfer of authority from the UN to NATO if SOF were not deployed).

The SOCCEs sent out Liaison Coordination Elements (LCEs) to the NATO and, most important, non-NATO units within each division's area of operations. The LCEs were assigned to the battalion or brigade commanders. Not unlike the Coalition Warfare Teams of DESERT STORM, the fundamental LCE mission was establishing communications



SOF and Romanian engineer battalion counterparts meet.



between the division and its non-NATO battalions. The LCEs made sure that the information and instructions passed from the division commander to the battalion or brigade commander were understood, which included explaining the intent and movements of allied forces. If needed, the LCEs could also do laser target designation, call for fire, and request medical evacuations. Importantly, the LCEs had their own vehicles so that they could keep up with their parent units.

LCEs performed the following missions: conducting daily patrols with parent battalions; maintaining reliable communications; assessing the attitudes of local populations and former warring factions; spreading the word on the IFOR mission; providing accurate information on any incidents; and accomplishing route reconnaissance. In addition to their Special Forces members, LCEs were augmented by Special Tactics personnel trained in Special Operations Tactical Air Controller (SOTAC) procedures for close air support. When the battalion or brigade became comfortable with doing its mission essential tasks, the LCEs redeployed. No other forces, save SOF, had the requisite capabilities to do these delicate diplomatic operations.

In the early stages of JOINT ENDEAVOR, SOF's flexibility and specialized capabilities were used to ensure that NATO forces arrived in the right place at the right time. SOF's major contributions included: SOF enabling forces were in place on time; SOF aircraft



Distributing *Herald of Peace* in Bosnia.

(capable of flying in the most difficult weather) ensured timely SOF deployments into Bosnia-Herzegovina despite weather that grounded all other aircraft; SOF aircraft flew the IFOR commander through adverse weather to reach meetings and ceremonies; SOCIFOR provided a quick reaction force; and SEALs supported the bridging of the Sava River.

Civil Affairs forces likewise had important missions for JOINT ENDEAVOR. The CA forces coordinated the reconstruction of the civil infrastructure and organized relief efforts of more than 500 UN, government, and non-government organizations. Civil Affairs personnel, assigned to the Combined Joint Civil Military Operations Center (with CA task forces assigned to each multinational division), assisted in restoring basic services such as public transportation, public works and utilities, public health, and commerce, as well as helping with elections and setting up new national governments. CA specialists worked with organizations like the World Bank and the International Police Task Force to facilitate the delivery of their services. CA soldiers also helped to develop plans for, and coordinated the repatriation of, refugees.

PSYOP forces had the important task of disseminating factual information to the populace inside the former Yugoslavia.



SEALs supported bridging of the Sava River.



Assigned to the Combined Joint Psychological Task Force, U.S. Army PSYOP forces used print media (the weekly *Herald of Peace* newspaper and posters), “Radio IFOR” broadcasts, and some television broadcasts to accomplish their missions. They also conducted a mine awareness campaign, aimed primarily at children, and distributed literature (such as coloring books) to stress the dangers of land mines and ordnance.

### Operation JOINT GUARD

Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR officially ended on 20 December 1996, and the IFOR gave way to Operation JOINT GUARD’s Stabilization Force (SFOR). Planned to last 18 months, JOINT GUARD built upon the success of JOINT ENDEAVOR—NATO-led forces had separated the former warring factions, allowed the transfer of land, moved heavy weapons into storage areas, and demobilized troops of the former warring factions. In essence, SFOR was a maintenance force responsible for deterring hostilities and contributing to a secure environment which promoted the reestablishment of civil authority.

SOCEUR disbanded SOCIFOR on 20 December and lodged command and control of all SOF inside Bosnia in the revamped CJSOTF. Now commanded by a U.S. SOF officer, the CJSOTF deployed the SOCCEs to each multinational division and LCEs to the Romanian Battalion, Hungarian Battalion, and Russian Brigade. In addition, SOF took on the responsibility of providing Joint Commission Observers (JCOs). These six-man teams roamed the country as “honest brokers” to establish communications between all the factions and the SFOR commanders. SOCEUR still had mission responsibility for combat search and rescue, personnel recovery, close air support, and special reconnaissance. Likewise, Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations forces continued accomplishing

under JOINT GUARD what they had done for JOINT ENDEAVOR. Psychological Operations forces worked for the Combined Task Force. All these missions ran until June 1998, when the operation evolved again.

### Operation JOINT FORGE

On 20 June 1998, Operation JOINT FORGE began as the follow-on operation to Operation JOINT GUARD. JOINT FORGE had the same primary goal as JOINT GUARD—to maintain peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina and sustain the conditions necessary to rebuild that nation. To carry out this mission, NATO continued the Stabilization Force (SFOR), comprised of forces from both NATO and non-NATO nations. SFOR ensured the peace, kept the troops of the former warring factions demobilized, and prevented the revival of hostilities.



SOF LCE attached to the Russian Brigade.  
LCEs lived and worked with coalition partners.



SOF Joint Commission Observer teams helped stabilize local areas and provided "ground truth" to senior military commanders.

The primary changes in Operation JOINT FORGE were in the SOF's command structure and missions. In JOINT FORGE, the CJSOTF consolidated operations with Forward Operating Base (FOB) 103. The combined headquarters exercised command and control over all U.S. SOF in MND-North. The combined CJSOTF/FOB reported directly to COMSOF. U.S. SOF operated only in MND-North, except for liaison officers attached to MND-SE and MND-SW and Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations specialists, who operated throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina.

SOF's missions saw little change in MND-North in JOINT FORGE. The SOCCE performed as it had in Operation JOINT ENDEAVOR, and one LCE was still attached to the Russian Brigade. U.S. SOF in Bosnia-Herzegovina theater worked in eight-man Joint Commission Observer Teams (JCOs) in the MND-North. The JCOs' critical role was to maintain situational awareness and provide ground truth to the CJSOTF and SFOR commanders. To do this, they maintained direct contact with leaders of the former warring factions and key members of the local civil and military leadership. They served as contact points between the MND-North

commander and local ethnic leaders and as impartial information brokers between different elements of the populace. They also provided the MND-North commander with information about conditions throughout Bosnia-Herzegovina. U.S. SOF provided a quick reaction force that stood ready to defend any JCOs that were threatened. At the peak of the JCO mission in 1996 and 1997 there were 16 teams covering all of Bosnia. Twice during their time in Bosnia, U.S. JCO houses were attacked by rocket-propelled grenades.

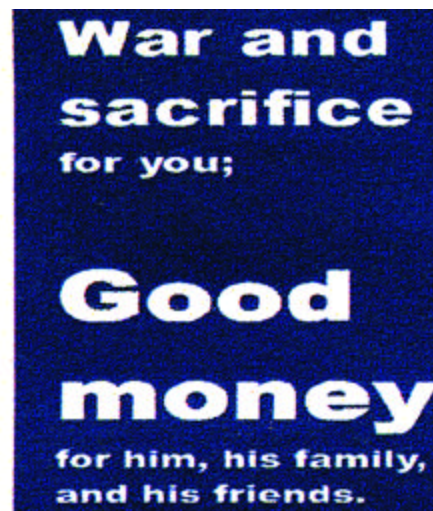
As the environment in Bosnia-Herzegovina matured, the JCO's contributions were judged to be of less importance as conventional forces increasingly reported similar types of information. In May 2001, the last U.S. JCO house was closed.

The majority of SOF personnel for JOINT FORGE were Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations specialists. They assisted in reestablishing civil institutions and helped prepare for elections that were held in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the autumn of 1998. SOF continued its support to JOINT FORGE throughout 1999, helping to sustain peace in the area during the Kosovo conflict.

### Operation ALLIED FORCE

NATO initiated Operation ALLIED FORCE on 24 March 1999 to put an end to Serbia's violent repression of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo. The 19-nation ALLIED FORCE coalition conducted an unrelenting bombing campaign in Serbia and Kosovo for 78 days, eventually forcing Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic to withdraw his forces from the province and stop the "ethnic cleansing" of Kosovar Albanians. The bombing strategy did not prevent Serbia from forcing an estimated 800,000 refugees out of the country, however, which produced an enormous humanitarian crisis in the neighboring states of Albania and Macedonia. Furthermore, the air campaign did





The 4th PSYOP Group distributed over 104 million leaflets in Serbia and Kosovo during Operation Allied Force.

not eliminate all of Serbia's surface-to-air missiles, which managed to shoot down two U.S. aircraft.

SOF played a strategic role throughout the Balkans region during ALLIED FORCE. In Albania and Macedonia, Civil Affairs units participated in Operation SHINING HOPE, the humanitarian assistance mission to aid Kosovar refugees. CA elements coordinated large-scale humanitarian relief efforts with U.S. government agencies and international relief organizations, arranging food, shelter, and medical care for the refugee camps. SOF helicopters airlifted supplies into refugee areas prior to the conventional forces arriving in

theater. Within Kosovo itself, SOF aircraft dropped food and supplies to displaced persons.

SOF also carried out an extensive PSYOP campaign. From beyond Serb borders, EC-130E Commando Solo aircraft transmitted daily Serbian-language radio and television programs into the area, informing the Serb people of their government's genocidal practices and televising photographs of Kosovar refugees in Albania and Macedonia. MC-130H aircraft dropped millions of leaflets that decried the Serbs' untenable situation, warning them against committing war crimes, and pointing out how Milosevic's policies were ruining their country.

SOF also engaged in direct action and special reconnaissance missions. AC-130 gunships attacked Serbian positions. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, a SOF team destroyed a stretch of railroad tracks to prevent Serbian troop movements. SOF deployed near the Albanian-Kosovo border and served as the "eyes and ears" of TF HAWK. These Special Forces soldiers and Combat Controllers called in targeting information, prevented friendly fire incidents, and reported on fighting inside of Kosovo.



F-16 CSAR, Operation ALLIED FORCE  
Members of the MH-60 aircrew who successfully rescued  
an F-16 pilot shot down in Serbia.



SOF successfully rescued the only two U.S. pilots downed during ALLIED FORCE. In separate missions, SOF combat search and rescue teams rescued an F-117A pilot who was shot down near Belgrade on 27 March and an F-16 pilot shot down in western Serbia on 2 May. On each occasion, a mixture of MH-53 Pave Low and MH-60 Pave Hawk helicopters were used to retrieve the downed fliers. These rescues had profound effects on the outcome of the operation by denying Milosevic a potent information operation campaign.

### Operation JOINT GUARDIAN

On 9 June 1999, the government of the former republic of Yugoslavia acceded to a “military technical agreement” that ended its army’s occupation of Kosovo. Operation JOINT GUARDIAN, the mission led by NATO’s Kosovo Force (KFOR) to enforce the peace agreement, maintain public security, and provide humanitarian assistance, began immediately thereafter. By June 15, SOF units had entered the American sector in Kosovo to reconnoiter the area and assess conditions for conventional forces.

These SOF personnel encountered the antipathy between Serb and Albanian Kosovars. SOF applied techniques proven in Bosnia-Herzegovina to Kosovo. SOF soon became KFOR’s source for “ground truth” in Kosovo’s volatile environment. Special Forces teams patrolled the American sector

independently and also as the U.S. liaison element to Polish and Russian units. For example, a SF Operational Detachment-Alpha conducted the first combined operations with the Russians since World War II as they sought to quash nightly attacks by militants. PSYOP personnel worked to stabilize the situation by distributing native-language leaflets that promoted mine awareness and acceptance of the rule of law. Special Forces soldiers also monitored the Serb military’s withdrawal from the province and assessed the flow of refugees returning to their homeland.

Civil Affairs soldiers, previously engaged in supporting Operation SHINING HOPE, moved forward to assist in reconstituting Kosovo’s infrastructure. One of their first actions was to help establish a civil-military coordination committee, a step toward

returning Kosovo to civilian control. CA soldiers soon improved conditions throughout the province, as they helped organize the importation of heating fuel, repairs to electric grids and water systems, the activation of a civilian-run radio station in the capital city of Pristina, and the reopening of schools. They also coordinated the activities of a number of non-governmental organizations and helped a UN-sponsored International Police Task Force begin work in Kosovo.

*During JOINT GUARDIAN, CPT Robert Schaefer and his ODA 056 served as the Liaison Coordination Element (LCE) to the Russian 13th Tactical Group. This ODA supported the Russian Brigade, provided situational awareness for TF Falcon, enhanced force protection, and collected information on the locations and activities of both Serbian and Kosovo Liberation Army (UCK) forces. For the first month and a half, ODA 056 had intense nightly firefights with UCK soldiers and Kosovar Albanian militants. The team also conducted presence patrols, distributed PSYOP materials, and conducted quick reaction force (QRF) and MEDEVAC training with the Russians. In late July 1999, ODA 056 called in artillery fire in support of the Russians—the first time that the United States has supported Russia with artillery since WW II. CPT Schaefer, fluent in Russian, helped the Russian brigade plan and execute two large search and raid operations which confiscated UCK weapons. These raids were the largest combined U.S.-Russian operations since WW II. These successful operations demonstrated how tactical success can influence the strategic environment by helping to build better U.S.-Russian relations.*

Special Forces liaison teams, including those attached to a Polish battalion and a Russian Brigade, initiated street patrols

throughout their areas of operations. To counter ethnic violence, these patrols arranged meetings between local Albanians and Serbs, sought out illegal weapons caches, and assisted war crimes investigators in locating massacre sites. The teams' eyewitness reports gave the JOINT GUARDIAN leadership a clear understanding of local conditions. In another application of SOF's unique capabilities, a Special Forces detachment, skilled in the Arabic culture and language, deployed to Kosovo to serve as a liaison coordination element between KFOR and units from the United Arab Emirates and the Kingdom of Jordan. In September 1999, SOF integrated

these forces into the Kosovo area of operations, further strengthening the KFOR coalition.

SOF provided the TF Falcon commanders with unique capabilities—liaison, ground truth, special reconnaissance, direct action, and peacekeeping. Headquarters USSOCOM provided these SOF forces with the oversight, resourcing, and equipment needed to complete these highly complex and sensitive missions.



#### Operation PROVIDE COMFORT (1991-1996)

Following DESERT STORM, Saddam Hussein put down a Kurdish uprising in northern Iraq. The U.S. and its allies stopped the dying by establishing safe havens and providing humanitarian assistance. SOF spearheaded this effort.



## ***Peace Operations and Crisis Responses***

Since the symbolic fall of the Berlin Wall, SOF have had to perform a variety of missions that fall under the category of “Operations Other Than War.” At one time, these operations were considered extraordinary, but during the 1990s, operations other than war became the norm. For example, in its first 40 years, the UN conducted only 13 such operations, but in the years from 1988 to 1994, the number of peace operations more than doubled. Although peace operations were not new to the 1990s, what was unprecedented were the numbers, pace, scope, and complexity of recent operations.

Operations other than war included a wide range of missions, such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, non-combatant evacuation operations (NEOs), humanitarian mine action, peacekeeping operations, crisis response, combatting terrorism, enforcement of sanctions or exclusion zones, and show of force. With conventional forces, SOF have participated in these types of operations, often as the lead military organization. Such capabilities as cultural and language familiarity, warrior-diplomat skills, maturity and professionalism made SOF an ideal force for these operations.

### **Operation PROVIDE COMFORT**

SOF’s diverse talents made it a natural choice to support humanitarian assistance efforts. Perhaps the best example of SOF’s capabilities to deal with a large scale disaster was Operation PROVIDE COMFORT. At the end of DESERT STORM, in February 1991, Iraqi Kurds revolted against Saddam Hussein, but his forces quickly crushed the rebellion. Hundreds of thousands of Kurds fled to the mountains in northern Iraq and southeastern Turkey.

In April 1991, EUCOM initiated Operation PROVIDE COMFORT to stop further Iraqi attacks and to establish a safe haven for the Kurds. On short notice, MC-130Es led in other aircraft to drop emergency supplies to the Kurdish refugees in the mountains of Iraq and Turkey. Next, Special Forces personnel, supported by MH-53J helicopters, located suitable sites for refugee camps and worked with refugee leaders to organize and distribute supplies to the populace. Civil Affairs units developed plans for medical assistance, food distribution, and daily camp operations, and then managed their implementation. Joint SOF medical teams provided medical assistance and training, such as camp sanitation, and were instrumental in dramatically reducing the death rate. SEALs and Special Boat Unit personnel provided medical support and security in camps. Psychological Operations forces supported efforts to end chaotic conditions by producing millions of leaflets and by loudspeaker presentations. Their efforts also helped to convince the Kurds to return to their homes. SOF were credited with saving thousands of lives by providing skilled personnel to rebuild the civil infrastructure, establish supply networks, and furnish medical assistance and training.

### **Humanitarian Mine Action**

Landmines have proven to be one of the most dangerous and lasting problems created by recent conflicts. USSOCOM was a leader in the effort to cope with the humanitarian disaster caused by the 100,000,000 mines buried around the world. SOF conducted humanitarian demining operations first in Operation SAFE PASSAGE in 1988. At that time, over 10,000,000 landmines remained from the Soviet invasion, preventing millions of refugees from returning to Afghanistan. Troops from 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne) deployed to Pakistan to work with the Afghan refugees and the UN. SAFE





Operation SAFE PASSAGE, 1989-1991  
In a camp in Pakistan, a Special Forces NCO and an Afghan instructor teach mine clearing techniques to Afghan refugees.

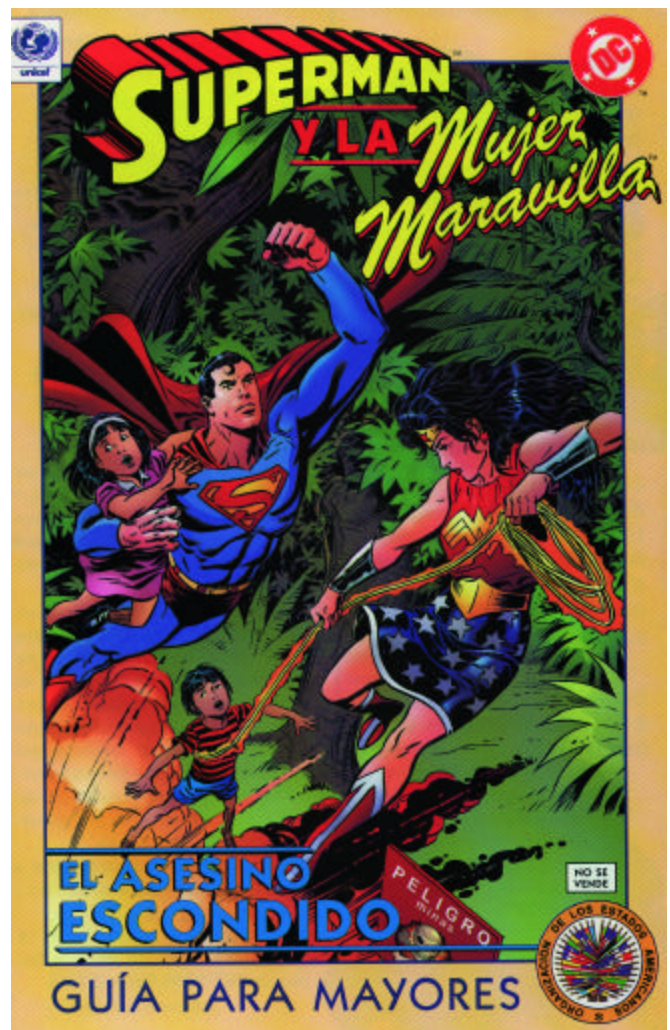
PASSAGE became the test-bed and prototype for subsequent humanitarian demining operations by both the UN and SOF.

The Special Forces soldiers faced enormous challenges. There was no effective Afghan government, and work with the refugees had to be coordinated with the UN, Pakistan, and a vast array of private organizations. In this amorphous situation, the Special Forces troops had to invent humanitarian demining doctrine and sell it to the other agencies. The mutually suspicious Afghan tribes and factions required the Special Forces to use their political skills as well as their technical knowledge.

SOF developed training programs and employed the “train the trainer” concept so the Afghans could run the demining program themselves and continue the program without outside assistance. This technique enabled millions of Afghans to know how to identify, avoid, mark and report mines, and thousands of Afghans learned how to destroy mines. By the time the Special Forces troops left in 1991, the Afghans were conducting effective mine clearing operations.

SOF and the UN next conducted demining operations in Cambodia in 1993. Since then, the U.S. humanitarian demining program has expanded dramatically. In 2001, SOF conducted humanitarian demining activities in

19 countries: Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Estonia, Georgia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mauritania, Nicaragua, Oman, Peru, Thailand, Vietnam and Zambia. Each situation was very different because of various types of mines—40 different types of mines were found in Afghanistan alone—the multitude of organizations, and the wide ranging terrain and environmental conditions—from the Sahara Desert to mountainous jungles. Time and again, the knowledge, flexibility, and resourcefulness of



In conjunction with the UN, the Organization of American States, and DC Comics, PSYOP soldiers distributed mine awareness comic books to Central American children.

SOF enabled them to adjust the program to suit local political, geographic, and technical circumstances.

The humanitarian demining program had three critical elements: mine awareness, mine survey and clearance, and national command and control. Mine awareness reduced civilian casualties by teaching people how to spot mines, how to get out of a mined area safely, and how to mark and report mined areas. The 4th Psychological Operations Group took the lead in mine awareness and developed effective programs tailored to the specific needs of each country. These programs used every sort of media from radio and television to T-shirts, caps, book bags, and comic books.

The Special Forces groups developed and taught the mine survey and clearance portions of the program. SOF mine survey teams determined the actual size of the mined area. Mine clearing, the centerpiece of the program, was slow and potentially very dangerous work, so proper training was critical. Special Forces soldiers employed the “train-the-trainer” approach that trained mineclearers as well as indigenous mineclearing instructors, and eventually led to the establishment of national demining schools.

Civil Affairs troops worked with the host nation to establish a national demining headquarters. In most nations, civilian agencies ran the mine awareness programs. Coordinating the efforts of several different ministries and determining the sequence of demining operations were politically sensitive and critical to the success of the demining operations. Civil Affairs troops, therefore, were ideally suited for helping developing nations solve these thorny problems and integrating humanitarian demining into national recovery and development plans.

In 1997, President Clinton committed the U.S. to eliminating the threat of landmines to civilians by 2010. To achieve this ambitious goal, USSOCOM’s humanitarian demining

effort expanded substantially in 1998 and 1999. Whereas in 1997 SOF had deployed to 14 countries to support humanitarian demining operations, by 1999 that figure had doubled to 28. One of the more complex operations occurred in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where SOF worked with the UN, the U.S. State Department, NATO’s Stabilization Force (SFOR), and the armies representing each of Bosnia’s ethnic groups to establish three demining training centers in the country.

In 1998, SOF trained and equipped instructor cadres for the Bosnian Serbs, Croats, and Muslims and guided them through their first demining classes. SOF also helped the local forces transform their ruined buildings into professional training facilities and taught them how to sustain their training operations. By the end of 1999, the three training centers had graduated more than 500 deminers, who helped to revitalize the Bosnia-Herzegovina economy by restoring thousands of acres of land to productive use. EUCOM reviewed the program in 1999 and concluded that the SOF-developed training centers continued to produce effective deminers and had become an integral part of the nation’s demining operations. The training mission’s success was attributed to SOF’s ability to develop a rapport with each of the entity armies and to inculcate a higher degree of professionalism in them.

By late 1999, humanitarian demining operations had been conducted by SOCCENT, SOCPAC, SOCSOUTH, and SOCEUR; all five active-duty Special Forces Groups; all six active-duty Psychological Operations Battalions; and the active-duty Civil Affairs Battalion. The reserve components fully supported these operations, as well. In Asia, for instance, SOCPAC, the 1st Special Forces Group, the Psychological Operations Battalion, and Civil Affairs troops worked with the national governments of Cambodia and the People’s Republic of Laos, the UN, and many



non-governmental organizations to make people aware of the landmine danger and to help clear mined areas.

SOF has conducted humanitarian mine action activities in the following countries so far for FY2002: Ecuador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Cambodia, Estonia, Honduras, Mauritania, Thailand, and Vietnam.

### African Crisis Response Initiative

In 1994, Rwanda experienced human genocide of horrific proportions. As a result of these atrocities, U.S. officials from the Office of the Secretary of Defense visited the Rwandan massacre sites, spoke with refugees, and issued a report that helped to focus attention on the region. The next year, Burundi, Rwanda's neighbor to the south, also experienced political unrest and appeared to be heading down the same road that Rwanda had traveled some months before. By November 1995, the Defense Department had drafted a proposal to deal with the unrest in Burundi, the centerpiece of which was the training of African peacekeeping troops. The objective was to train African troops to conduct peacekeeping operations within their



Special Forces instructors trained Senegalese soldiers in marksmanship and other basic soldier skills for ACRI.

continent. This initial proposal would become the core for the African Crisis Response Initiative (ACRI), which the State Department launched in October 1996. The U.S., however, worked only with those African countries that met certain prerequisites, including democratically elected governments, civilian control of the military, and human rights policies. SOF, and especially Special Forces soldiers, became an integral part of ACRI.

The African Crisis Response Initiative used military assets from the U.S. and its European allies to train battalion-sized units from various African nations for peacekeeping operations on their continent. The 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne) implemented the ACRI plan by developing a program of instruction and sending in teams to conduct training. Drawing from NATO, UN, and U.S. doctrine, Special Forces planners developed common peacekeeping tactics, techniques, and procedures. Training African battalions to common doctrine and standards assured that the different forces could effectively work together if deployed on a peacekeeping mission. As devised by the 3rd Special Forces Group (Airborne), ACRI training consisted of two phases: an initial, intensive 60-day training period (individual, platoon, company, leader and staff training) followed by sustainment training and exercises. By the end of FY2001, Special Forces teams, along with elements of the 96th Civil Affairs Battalion and the 4th Psychological Operations Group, had conducted ACRI training in Senegal, Malawi, Ghana, Mali, Benin, Kenya, and the Ivory Coast. This multinational peacekeeping effort in Africa held out great promise for the future, and was another example of SOF fulfilling the role of Global Scouts.

### Operation FOCUS RELIEF

After the collapse of civil authority in Sierra Leone, the United States offered equipment and training to neighboring countries to establish a regional force capable of





Special Forces Soldiers train Nigerian forces.

reestablishing civil order in the country. Under Operation FOCUS RELIEF, up to five Nigerian battalions, one Ghanaian and one Senegalese battalion were to be trained for peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone under the auspices of UN Charter, Chapter VII, for the purposes of establishing peace and order.

In November 2000, members of the 3rd SFG (A) began the first phase of the operation, training two Nigerian battalions. The training included basic training on the new equipment, combat lifesaver medical training, and infantry tactics. Special Forces medics worked with the host nation medics on advanced lifesaving skills, and leaders were taught how to create combat orders and conduct military decision-making and planning. During this deployment, three SF soldiers were stopped by Nigerian police at a local roadblock. They identified themselves to the police; however, an altercation ensued. Shots were fired, and the ODA members and embassy driver evaded the police and local civilians who were chasing them. One of the soldiers fired warning shots when two civilians attacked one of the ODA members. After dispersing the crowd, the team made their way to a local gated house, set up security, and notified the embassy. After completing training in December 2000, these troops deployed with the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), to assist in the implementation of the Lomé Peace Accord.

The second phase of training took place in Ghana and Senegal during June to August 2001. The troops were trained in the use of new equipment, small unit tactics, first-aid training, civil-military operations, and human rights. Ambassador Kathryn Dee Robinson said, "Operation FOCUS RELIEF demonstrates the commitment of the U.S. government in assisting the restoration of stability to the West Africa sub-region."

### Counter-Drug Operations

Illegal drug trafficking was an international threat increasingly affecting all nations. USSOCOM conducted counter-drug (CD) training missions during the decade of the 1990s and beyond. The National Drug Control Strategy, announced in September 1989, significantly refocused the Defense Department's CD effort. USSOCOM provided forces to train and assist host nation forces to enforce their own counter-drug laws. SOF also trained personnel from drug law enforcement agencies. In addition, the command provided forces to patrol and reconnoiter portions of the border with Mexico and supplied communications experts to support other theater CINCs' CD efforts.



Colombian Marines from Forward Riverine Post-93 on graduation day with Counterdrug Mission SEAL Team Four/SBU-22 trainers.

In 1992, the CD effort doubled to a total of 233 military training teams, deployments for training and other missions. Support to SOUTHCOM and law enforcement agencies accounted for most of the missions, but SOF began to expand CD efforts in the PACOM area as well. The SOF CD effort remained a large part of our national effort. In 1997, SOF began to provide CD training to the Mexican Army and Navy. Another important initiative of the late 1990s, USSOCOM began deploying patrol coast ships to the SOUTHCOM area in order to interdict drug smuggling.

#### SOF Support to Plan Colombia

At the request of the Colombian government, SOUTHCOM in December 1998 agreed to assist in the formation of a Colombian Army (COLAR) CD battalion (later expanded to a brigade). In 1999, USSOCOM supported a major training program in Colombia, whose goal was to develop units capable of deploying rapidly and conducting independent CD operations in all types of terrain, weather, and visibility. SOF completed training for all three COLAR battalions by May 2001. SOF was scheduled to provide sustainment training to the COLAR CD Brigade on a continuing basis.

#### Maritime Interdiction Operations in the Persian Gulf

Special Operations Forces (SOF) were key participants in anti-smuggling Maritime Interdiction Operations (MIOs) in the Persian Gulf. On 25 August 1990, the UN Security Council (UNSC) passed UNSC Resolution 665 authorizing “those member states co-operating with the government of Kuwait which are deploying maritime forces to the area to use such measures . . . to halt all inward and outward maritime shipping in order to inspect and verify their cargoes . . . .” The purpose of



Maritime Interdiction of Russian tanker Volgoneft-147 on 2 February 2000.

MIOs was to halt vessels smuggling illegal gas and oil from Iraq and to divert them to a port for auction of both the smuggled goods and the vessel.

To date, SOF have participated in hundreds of successful MIOs, significantly curtailing Saddam Hussein’s efforts to fund the rebuilding of Iraq’s military capabilities. Funds derived from auctions were used to pay for continued MIO missions.

#### CT-43A Recovery Operation

On several occasions during JOINT ENDEAVOR, SOCEUR had to discharge both its normal theater-wide responsibilities and respond to small-scale contingencies. On 3 April 1996, a CT-43A crashed on a mountainside above Dubrovnik, Croatia, killing all 35 aboard. Included as passengers were



CROATIA, April 1996  
A Pave Low hovers near Secretary Brown’s crashed CT-43A.

Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown and a number of corporate executives, as well as the Air Force crew. Special operations helicopters flew to the crash site in some of the worst flying conditions in the Balkans. SOCEUR completed the recovery operation in four days, despite the extreme cold and wet conditions and rugged mountainside terrain.

### ***NEO Operations***

#### **Operation SILVER ANVIL**

Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR) conducted Operation SILVER ANVIL, a noncombatant evacuation operation (NEO) during a coup in Sierra Leone in Spring 1992. Commanded by BG Richard W. Potter, SOCEUR and its components planned the operation, deployed, successfully conducted an evacuation from a remote location, sustained themselves, and redeployed, without any assistance from conventional forces.

The NEO force consisted of COMSOCEUR, elements from Company C, 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group (Airborne) [1-10th SFG (A)], and the 39th Special Operations Wing (since redesignated the 352nd Special Operations Group). Also included were communications specialists from the SOCEUR Signal Detachment, along with other SOCEUR staff, two MC-130 Combat Talons from the 7th Special Operations Squadron (SOS), two HC-130 tankers from the 67th SOS, aircrews, combat controllers, and maintenance personnel.

On the night of 29 April 1992, Company C was conducting an exercise at Stuttgart, when BG Potter informed them of a coup in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and directed them to begin work on the “real-world” mission. Within 15 hours of notification, SOF performed mission analysis, configured the unit’s equipment, wrote orders, issued war-stocks, loaded the aircraft, and deployed. The coup in Sierra Leone had created an unstable



Engine Running Onload (ERO) of a group of U.S. citizens departing Lungi Airport on 3 May. CW2 Don Bennet leads the column to a waiting HC-130 from the 67th SOS.

security environment, but SOF quickly developed a rapport with the local military and arranged for a safe evacuation with no incidents. They evacuated over 400 American citizens, third-country noncombatants, and USAF MEDCAP team members in the following two days.

Previously, EUCOM had concentrated on Cold War operations, so SILVER ANVIL signaled a transition as EUCOM focused more on crisis response operations. Because of SOF’s success in Sierra Leone, they became EUCOM’s force of choice for first response in crises. Building on lessons learned from SILVER ANVIL, SOCEUR developed a capability to execute contingency operations anywhere in the theater within hours of notification. The embassy assessment that the JSOTF conducted in Freetown became a model for the EUCOM survey and assessment teams (ESAT) that SOCEUR would deploy to other embassies in later years.

#### **Operation ASSURED RESPONSE**

In the Spring of 1996, while SOF were finishing the CT-43A recovery effort, SOCEUR responded to a crisis in Liberia, where a civil war endangered Americans and other foreign nationals. The U.S. had to deploy forces





Operation ASSURED RESPONSE, April 1996  
SOF evacuated over 2,100 noncombatants from  
the U.S. Embassy in Liberia.

quickly to save lives, protect the American Embassy, and initiate a noncombatant evacuation operation (NEO). The only integrated force with its own airlift and strike force ready and available was SOCEUR. In fact, within hours of redeploying from Dubrovnik to Stuttgart on 7 April, SOF aboard an MC-130H had launched for Sierra Leone, the intermediate staging base for Operation ASSURED RESPONSE. Using its Air Force MH-53J helicopters (augmented later by Army MH-47D helicopters), SOCEUR first sent SEALs, on 9 April, and then Special Forces to provide security for the U.S. Embassy and implement an orderly evacuation of Americans and third country nationals. On 13 April, the Psychological Operations Task Force arrived and was ready to conduct force protection loudspeaker operations for ASSURED RESPONSE. SOF had the situation well in hand and had evacuated 436 Americans and 1,677 foreign nationals when the Marines relieved SOCEUR on 20 April 1996.

### Operation SHADOW EXPRESS

SOF returned to Liberia in the fall of 1998 after violent civic unrest in Monrovia again threatened the U.S. embassy. On 18 September, government forces fired on Krahn leader Roosevelt Johnson and his entourage as

they were talking to U.S. officials at the embassy entrance. The attack wounded two U.S. personnel and killed four Krahn. The Americans returned fire, killing two policemen. The Americans and the Johnson party retreated into the embassy compound, setting the stage for an extended siege.

The next day, Liberian President Charles Taylor demanded Johnson's surrender, and an attack on the embassy appeared imminent. EUCOM responded by directing SOCEUR to dispatch a 12-man survey and assessment team (ESAT), which was led by Major Joe Becker, an Air Force SOF helicopter pilot, and Senior Chief Petty Officer Pat Ellis, a SEAL, and included several SOF intelligence specialists. The ESAT team arrived at the embassy on 21 September and, within a few hours, ascertained that an armed force was massing to attack the compound. SCPO Ellis and Major Becker alerted ECOMOG, a Nigerian-led African peacekeeping force then in Monrovia. The ESAT team and the Marine embassy guards devised a defense plan, with the ESAT on the chancery roof and the Marines defending from within the building. Shortly thereafter, an ECOMOG checkpoint stopped two truckloads of men armed with rocket propelled grenade launchers from approaching the embassy. The State Department subsequently arranged for



Operation SHADOW EXPRESS  
SCPO Ellis (third from right) patrolling with ECOMOG  
and U.S. Embassy personnel in Monrovia, Liberia.

the Johnson entourage to relocate to a third country. The ESAT team planned the move, coordinated logistical support, and provided security for the Johnson group's departure.

On 26 September, the Defense Department ordered additional U.S. forces into the region. In anticipation of this mission, SOCEUR dispatched USS *Chinook*, a SOF patrol coastal ship from NSWU-10, toward Liberia from Rota, Spain, with an 11-meter rigid inflatable boat (RIB) and four special boat operators aboard. Within 12 hours of notification on the 26th, SOCEUR deployed a SOF command and control element from Naval Special Warfare Unit 2 (NSWU-2), accompanied by approximately 20 SEALs, two Air Force Combat Controllers, and an Air Force flight surgeon, on an MC-130 to a forward operating location in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The force landed in Freetown on the 27th. *Chinook* came into Freetown's port 30 minutes after the aircraft landed, took 17 SEALs on board, and embarked for Liberia, with the remaining SOF staying in Freetown to maintain a tactical operations center. By the 28th, *Chinook* was positioned 2,000 yards offshore from the embassy, ready to provide an in-extremis response force.

From 29 September to 7 October, SOF maintained a highly visible maritime presence off the embassy's coastline. First *Chinook*, and later a second patrol coastal vessel, USS *Firebolt*, surveyed the Monrovia harbor and repeatedly conducted launch and recovery rehearsals of the RIB. The two patrol coastals also stood ready to evacuate the embassy, if necessary. The 10-day "presence operation" provided a calming influence on the situation and reaffirmed SOF's ability to deploy forces rapidly into an uncertain environment.

### Operation SILVER WAKE

In September 1996, a Special Forces sergeant first class was one of a four-person Military Liaison Team that went to Albania. As part of the Joint Contact Team Program, this



Operation SILVER WAKE, March 1997  
Evacuees boarding a Marine helicopter in Tirana, Albania.  
A Special Forces NCO in the embassy had a pivotal role in this NEO.

team coordinated Albania's requests for military visits that fostered civilian control of the military in a democratic society. This mission, however, was cut short by an incipient revolt in southern Albania. In January, the Special Forces sergeant assisted the American embassy in revising its emergency evacuation plan; this assistance included surveying helicopter landing zones.

After releasing him to the Military Liaison Team in late January, the American Ambassador recalled the Special Forces sergeant to the American embassy in late February, as the Albanian people's displeasure with their government had erupted again in open revolt. This lone noncommissioned officer became the focal point for NEO preparations. His activities ranged from coordinating a visit from the EUCOM Survey and Assessment Team, to prompting the embassy staff to define what should be done and when to do it as the revolt approached Tirana, to conducting area assessments that provided the embassy with accurate military judgments.

JTF SILVER WAKE notified the embassy that 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit helicopters would start the evacuation on



13 March. The Special Forces sergeant then went to the evacuation site in the embassy housing area, where he helped to write the passenger manifests and set up “sticks” of approximately 20 persons per helicopter. The helicopters approached the compound after dark. The Special Forces sergeant guided the first helicopter in by flashing “SOS” with his flashlight, despite the risk from random gunfire. For the remainder of the NEO, he provided invaluable service to the embassy staff and Marine evacuation force. The NEO ended on 26 March 1997, and the JTF evacuated nearly 900 civilians safely without incident. The Special Forces sergeant had shown again the maturity and professionalism of SOF. His leadership and expertise reassured the embassy staff and evacuees alike, and he provided a crucial link with the evacuation force.

During the first days of the NEO, an AC-130U from JSOTF2 at Brindisi flew over Tirana and the surrounding area, providing close air support, armed reconnaissance, and intelligence. On at least one occasion, the AC-130U’s mere presence halted a AAA battery’s fire. Its crew also directed evacuation helicopters away from SA-2 surface-to-air missile batteries. The crew ensured that the NEO proceeded safely.

#### Operation NOBLE OBELISK

In April 1997, an Operational Detachment Alpha or “A” Team (13 Special Forces soldiers) from the 3rd Special Forces Group (A) deployed to Freetown, Sierra Leone, for Joint Combined Exchange Training. Their mission was to train and promote a professional, apolitical military, one supportive of the elected government. On 25 May 1997, rebel forces and military members toppled the government. Once rebel shooting erupted at their training site, Special Forces soldiers manned security positions inside their compound, communicated with SOCEUR and EUCOM, and established intermittent contact with the embassy.

The next day, the detachment moved the 20 miles to Freetown. The Special Forces soldiers had to pass through two rebel roadblocks and near an army post, but the rapport with their former trainees enabled the Americans to proceed safely to the embassy.

In Freetown, the detachment commander divided his team to secure the two embassy compounds, and team members performed advance force operations, including reconnoitering the helicopter landing zone on the coast. They also defused a tense situation during a meeting of the senior ambassadors and rebel forces at the British High Commission residence. All of these activities required movement through a town riven by looting and indiscriminate fire.

On 29 May, team members conducted an early morning patrol through rebel-held areas to secure the landing zone for the Marines from the 22nd MEU. They established sniper positions, security, and coordinated with the Nigerians before the Marine helicopters arrived. The next day, the NEO began, and after escorting official U.S. personnel to the landing zone, Special Forces soldiers served as a buffer by establishing two blocking positions



Operation NOBLE OBELISK, May 1997  
Special Forces soldiers were in the middle of morning PT when a rebel force began shooting in their compound.



between the Marines and the marauding rebels. They succeeded in turning back rebel forces trying to reach the landing zone. The NEO evacuations ran from 30 May through 3 June, and a total of 2,509 people (including 454 U.S. citizens) were evacuated.

SOF played critical but very different roles in numerous NEOs in the late 1990s. General Henry H. Shelton attributed ASSURED RESPONSE's success to SOCEUR having "the right organization, the best equipment and, most important, the finest men and women ever fielded in special operations." SOF operators emphasized that "training as you are going to fight" fully prepared them for this short notice contingency. The NEO in Sierra Leone was ostensibly a Marine operation, but SOF made a critical difference by being in the right place at the right time. A mere 13 soldiers saved the embassy from further looting, protected crucial talks between senior ambassadors and the rebel leaders, and prevented firefights between the Marines and the rebels. Special Forces soldiers' so-called non-military skills—cultural sensitivity and area familiarization—paid large dividends. Likewise, the Special Forces sergeant in the American embassy during SILVER WAKE responded creatively in very fluid and ambiguous circumstances. Also, SOF participated in NEOs in the Congo and in Liberia for a second time. These NEOs demonstrated that SOF were the right force for situations that required independent initiative and mature professionalism to execute U.S. policy.

### Operation FIRM RESPONSE

Civil unrest in Brazzaville, the Congo, led EUCOM to direct SOCEUR to prepare to deploy an European Survey and Assessment Team (ESAT) and follow-on forces for an embassy reinforcement and possible evacuation. Twenty-two American and six Marine guards remained in the embassy as the security situation deteriorated quickly. The



NEO in the Congo—Operation FIRM RESPONSE  
ESAT planned the evacuation of the U.S. Embassy  
in Brazzaville, June 1997.

French had approximately 1,500 troops on the ground with armored vehicles and commandeered private vehicles outfitted for mounted patrols.

On 10 June, BG Geoffrey C. Lambert, COMSOCEUR, sent a 12-man ESAT with six support personnel in a 7th SOS MC-130H to Brazzaville to link up with the Defense Attaché and French at the airport, proceed to the embassy, and assess the embassy's security. Arriving at Maya-Maya Airfield amidst heavy gunfire, the ESAT unloaded the aircraft, and French paratroopers put 56 evacuees on the MC-130. The team moved to the embassy and began to harden their areas and improve living conditions at the embassy. During their nine days in Brazzaville, LTC David Mamaux led the team on multiple trips outside the compound to retrieve much needed supplies and sensitive materials, and to coordinate with the French military.

On 18 June, the team loaded the 12 remaining embassy personnel, their baggage, all sensitive items, and one dog, onto a chartered DC-3. The ESAT members and one Peace Corps volunteer departed Brazzaville later that same day. The assessment team provided crucial assistance to the U.S. ambassador when rebel forces attacked Brazzaville. The team conducted route reconnaissance, coordinated with the French military, provided communications support,



Operation FIRM RESPONSE, the Congo, June 1997: ESAT team leader coordinates with French Legionnaires at Brazzaville. Amidst considerable violence and looting, this SOF team, in the words of Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, “played a vital role. . . in ensuring the safe evacuation of scores of official and non-official Americans. It is a testament to their superb training and talents that this operation was successfully carried out with no American casualties.”

and organized the embassy staff for the NEO. Amidst considerable violence and looting, this SOF team insured the safe evacuation of 69 Americans.

FIRM RESPONSE proved again the obvious value of engagement, area orientation, and situational awareness. FIRM RESPONSE also illustrated the good and bad of command and control. CINCEUR directed that this would be a low profile mission. The decision to deploy only an augmented ESAT on a single aircraft constrained how the SOF ground commander conducted the operation and, ultimately, put SOF at risk on the ground. Moreover, BG Lambert had to accept responsibility for the mission but gave up control to EUCOM J3. In stark contrast to EUCOM’s handling of this operation, BG Lambert picked the team leader for all the right reasons—experience, Africa time, and warrior and diplomatic skills. And, he empowered him to operate in the fluid circumstances in Brazzaville. Lambert’s trust and confidence in his subordinates paid off.

Operation FIRM RESPONSE demonstrated what SOF brought to the “fight”—rapid planning and force sizing; an integrated package of air, ground, and maritime capabilities; mature, motivated, and

well-trained military personnel; and an ability to operate in an ambiguous environment. FIRM RESPONSE exposed the dilemmas and opportunities confronting SOF leaders and operators as they faced the complex battlespace, which characterized the post-Cold War era and the early 21st century. It had a “classic merging of all levels—tactical, operational, strategic and diplomatic,” where a bullet or a word or a gesture could have had ramifications far beyond Brazzaville.

### ***Humanitarian and Miscellaneous Contingencies***

#### **Operation FUERTE APOYO**

In October 1998, Hurricane Mitch brought near 180-mph winds and approximately 18 inches of rain to Central America. The storm was the worst natural disaster to strike Central America, claiming nearly 10,000 dead and another 13,000 missing in Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala. Mitch destroyed approximately 60 percent of the affected area’s infrastructure, destroying over 300 bridges and 70 percent of crops in the region, leaving 2,000,000 homeless. U.S. SOF responded to the call for aid before the rains had ended.



MH-60G Blackhawk crew members provide emergency evacuation to stranded villagers in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch.

Phase I of the relief effort focused on the rescue of flood victims and lasted until the end of November. Navy SEALs and Army SOF, working together, used Zodiacs and MH-60 Blackhawk helicopters to rescue an estimated 1,500 victims, including Carlos Flores Facusse, the president of Honduras. Members of the 15th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) were already in the area for a joint combined exchange training (JCET) exercise when the hurricane struck. They immediately refocused their mission to one of emergency assistance, delivering some 80 tons of oil, rice, beans, and sugar to villages cut off by the hurricane.

In Phase II, the relief phase, Civil Affairs (CA) soldiers helped to rebuild some of the infrastructures destroyed by the category five storm. SOF personnel cleaned wells, built roads and bridges, and ferried food, water and medical supplies to the hardest hit regions. Phase III of the operation began in early March with the exercise NEW HORIZONS 99, whose aim was the restoration of the beleaguered region.

#### Ecuador, May 1999

A test of SOF's warrior skills occurred on the evening of 2 May 1999 in northern Ecuador. A convoy, transporting 37 SOF personnel and Ecuadorian soldiers to a joint

counterdrug training exercise, was attacked by local bandits. The six-vehicle convoy was negotiating a hairpin turn on a muddy jungle road when it came upon a roadblock set up by a dozen masked and armed robbers.

The bandits had already stopped two passenger buses and several cars, and were holding about 50 civilians along the side of the road. Two bandits opened fire on the convoy, hitting the lead vehicle. The four Special Forces soldiers in that vehicle and a Civil Affairs soldier in the second vehicle engaged the bandits with their sidearms. Ecuadorian soldiers opened fire as well. After a firefight that lasted several minutes, eight of the bandits fled, leaving behind two dead and two prisoners, one of whom was wounded. One U.S. and one Ecuadorian soldier suffered minor wounds, but there were no civilian casualties.

When the Ecuadorian soldiers interrogated the prisoners, the crowd turned ugly, shouting for the prisoner's execution. The SOF soldiers took control and protected the prisoners from the angry crowd while a Special Forces medic treated the wounded. The dead and captured attackers were then taken to the training site and turned over to the local police. The government of Ecuador subsequently praised the action as professional and appropriate. This incident reaffirmed SOF's mature judgment, readiness to react to ambiguous situations, and commitment to human rights.

#### Colombia, July 1999

SOF's ability to support far-flung contingencies was again demonstrated in July 1999, during the recovery of a U.S. Army reconnaissance aircraft that had crashed in the Colombian Andes. The crash killed five U.S. Army and two Colombian soldiers who had been engaged in an airborne counterdrug reconnaissance mission.



A search plane found the wrecked aircraft the day after the crash, but poor weather and rugged terrain inhibited recovery efforts. At the direction of GEN Charles Wilhelm, USCINCSOUTH, Special Operations Command South (SOCSOUTH) deployed two MH-60L helicopters and support from Company D, 160th SOAR(A), and a liaison element. USSOCOM provided refueling assets, combat controllers, weather forecasters, and the requisite operational support. Two 16th SOW MC-130E Combat Talon and one MC-130H Combat Talon II moved the AFSOC elements from Hurlburt Field to Bogota, Colombia. An eight-man Special Forces element from the 7th SFG (A)—already supporting the counterdrug operational planning mission in Bogota with the U.S. country team—was incorporated into the operation to provide communications, coordination with host nation units, and their unique operational skills. Brigadier General James Parker, Commander SOCSOUTH, was assigned to lead the effort.

The MH-60L crews had trained in high-altitude operations and were familiar with the region and the host nation forces. The helicopters transported and inserted the Special Forces soldiers and a USAF combat controller into the crash site. These SOF helped Colombian and other U.S. personnel

search the wreckage. The MH-60Ls evacuated remains from the crash site to the forward operating location, whereupon an MC-130E and host nation aircraft carried them forward to Bogota. The Combat Talons also provided refueling capabilities at remote airfields that lacked adequate fuel stores.

The crash site proved to be an extremely dangerous environment. The wreckage was situated on a steep mountainside, with much of it suspended from trees and brush. The ground teams made an exhaustive search of the wreckage and surrounding area but were unable to enter the aircraft fuselage or move large pieces of the aircraft. To meet that challenge, a Special Forces team with mountaineering experience and unique demolitions capabilities was brought in from Company C, 3rd Battalion, 7th SFG (A) in Puerto Rico. The team employed their specialized skills to good effect and completed the recovery of remains and equipment from the crash site. Upon completion of their mission, the Special Forces soldiers destroyed the remaining wreckage with explosives.

Approximately 120 SOF participated in the mission. At the conclusion of the recovery operation, GEN Wilhelm commended all of the participants, declaring that the “unknown tactical situation, adverse weather, and rugged



MH-60L helicopters from D Company, 160th SOAR(A) transported SOF personnel to the crash site in Colombia.

terrain made this the most difficult and challenging operation of its type that I have seen in my 36 years of service.”

### Vietnam Flood Relief

On 9 November 1999, after 60 inches of rainfall, the U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam requested an expedited military airlift of relief supplies. SOCPAC sent an MC-130H and an MC-130E from Okinawa to Guam to pick up relief supplies. Both aircraft were back in Okinawa, awaiting mission tasking three hours before SOCPAC received its orders. The aircraft delivered relief supplies to Hue, Vietnam, and returned to Okinawa by 11 November. The 353rd SOG executed this mission in less than 36 hours, including the time to pre-position supplies. The U.S. ambassador congratulated the 353rd, saying that they were “the first to deliver aid to their doorstep. No other international donor has made as immediate an impact on the victims of the region as these flights allowed us to provide.”



A 353rd SOG crewman helps to unload supplies at Hue.

### Operation FUNDAMENTAL RESPONSE

Two weeks of unrelenting rain led to flash flooding in northern Venezuela, roads and bridges were damaged or destroyed, and flooding and landslides isolated many communities. On 16 December 1999, the

government of Venezuela declared a state of emergency. By 27 December, officials reported a possible death toll of up to 30,000 with 400,000 people homeless. Soldiers from the 7th Special Forces Group (Airborne) and the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) were among the U.S. troops who provided assistance to flood and mudslide survivors in Venezuela.

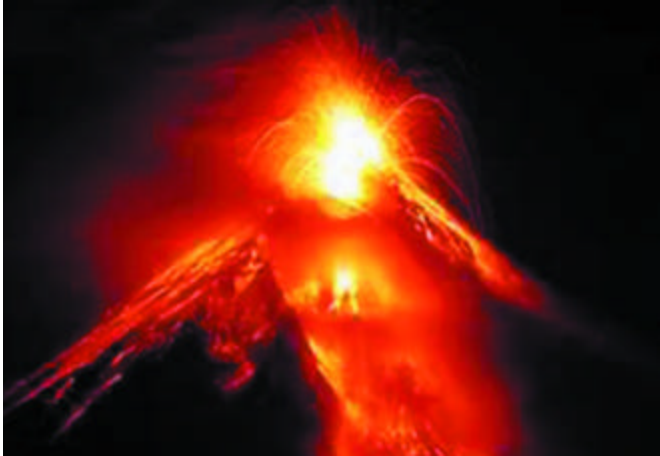
The Special Forces soldiers assisted in the evacuation efforts. The company's mission was to provide search and recovery and humanitarian assistance in support of the relief effort named Operation FUNDAMENTAL RESPONSE. The team arrived in the area on 17 December 1999 and aided in the rescue and evacuation of approximately 3,000 people.

Joint Task Force FUNDAMENTAL RESPONSE was established on 27 December 1999 in response to a request from the American Embassy in Caracas for search and rescue support and humanitarian assistance. The operation was conducted in two phases, emergency and rehabilitation. During the emergency phase, JTF-FR evacuated 5,558 Venezuelans; delivered and distributed over 381 tons of food, medical supplies, water and other supplies; and participated in disaster relief, engineering, medical (to include hazardous materials), and water assessments. During the rehabilitation phase, the JTF mission was to produce and distribute potable water. Reverse osmosis water purification units produced 2,891,686 gallons of potable water and distributed 2,542,568 gallons of water. Rotary wing aircraft (MH-60 and MH-47) flew 344 sorties.

### Operation FIERY RELIEF

Special Operations Command Pacific forces led U.S. humanitarian assistance operations in the southern Philippines following the eruption of the Mount Mayon Volcano. From 19 Feb - 4 Mar 2000, SOCPAC forces transitioned from Exercise BALIKATAN 00 to relief operations





to assist the Republic of the Philippines in easing the suffering of over 70,000 refugees. A SOCPAC C2 cell, an Operational Detachment Bravo and two Operational Detachments Alpha from 1/1st SFG (A), and two C-130H Combat Talon IIs from 353rd Special Operations Group aircraft were employed to transport supplies and set up tentage for the refugees in Legazpi City. On 5 March, 23 tents were erected, using the “train the trainer” concept—the Special Forces soldiers taught Filipino personnel to build tents without further assistance. The force reacted within 12 hours of notification and flawlessly executed the mission, delivering 36,000 pounds of tents and dust masks to families staying at evacuation centers. The JTF Commander summarized the operation as follows:

*“This was an outstanding example of the responsiveness and flexibility of CINCPAC’s Special Operations Forces. Our operational time line was so constrained that it afforded little room for any delays or failures. It was a series of minor miracles and hard work on the part of the entire JTF and the U.S. embassy that contributed to the success of the mission. Those miracles were the result of personal relationships developed by JTF personnel during BALIKATAN and relationships established by the US Embassy over the last few years. These relationships were the key to our success.”*



CAPT Robert Harward, DEPCOMSOPAC, led the SOF relief effort in FIERY RELIEF.

### Operation ATLAS RESPONSE

In 2000, two tropical storms dumped heavy rain in southeast Africa that left approximately a million people homeless. In Mozambique, hundreds of thousands of residents fled their homes. Germany, France, Britain, Spain, Portugal, Malawi, and the Netherlands responded with a multinational humanitarian relief effort. Working with these nations, the United States sent Joint Task Force-ATLAS RESPONSE (JTF-AR) to provide assistance to the devastated region.

SOCEUR provided the Joint Special Operations Task Force-ATLAS RESPONSE (JSOTF-AR), consisting of a headquarters and a Joint Special Operations Air Component (JSOAC). SOF also worked in the two Civil-Military Operations Centers (CMOCs). Most important, the JSOTF integrated seamlessly into the JTF structure, enabling SOF to make a number of contributions that were critical to the success of relief efforts in Mozambique.

The JSOTF-AR flew the only helicopters that were air refuelable. These aircraft permitted the JSOTF to extend the range of coverage and duration of flight so that its aircrews could reach outlying areas. MC-130P Combat Shadow tankers provided fuel for these aircraft.





SOF helicopters, like the MH-53M, were crucial to the relief because of the air refueling capability.

SOF personnel, both CA soldiers and JSOTF staff members, worked closely with individuals from various Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), Private Volunteer Organizations (PVOs), and International Organizations (IOs) to coordinate relief efforts. After assessing conditions in the

countryside, CA soldiers developed an exit strategy which convinced the government of Mozambique that it could then manage the relief efforts.

The JSOTF used for the first time long haul communications system called the theater deployable communications system (TDC) and this system contributed immeasurably to the JTF's communications requirements. SOF intelligence assets augmented the JTF's capabilities by having SOF intelligence personnel take low-level digital photographs from SOF aircraft of flooded and damaged areas, significantly improving information products.

By the end of the mission, the United States had delivered more than 1.5 million pounds of cargo and had flown more than 1,100 passengers as part of the international relief efforts.



Operation MOUNT HOPE III illustrated SOF's capabilities to do quick turnaround, low visibility operations. In June 1988, MH-47s from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Group (now Regiment) airlifted a Soviet MI-25 Hind helicopter from an isolated desert location to an airfield at night under extremely adverse weather conditions. Future challenges for the U.S. will mean that SOF must stay constantly ready to do such sensitive missions on short notice.

# WAR AGAINST TERRORISM

“On September 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country. Americans have known wars—but for the past 136 years, they have been wars on foreign soil, except for one Sunday in 1941. Americans have known the casualties of war—but not at the center of a great city on a peaceful morning. Americans have known surprise attacks—but never before on thousands of civilians. All of this was brought upon us in a single day—and night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack.” President George W. Bush, 20 September 2001

The president also told the nation that “every necessary weapon of war” would be used to disrupt and defeat the global terror network. And, he cautioned that this war would entail a lengthy campaign, unlike any previous war. Following the horrific terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, SOF took on even greater relevance and became the cornerstone of the U.S. military response to terrorism.

## Operation NOBLE EAGLE

On 11 September 2001, 20th Special Operations Squadron MH-53M helicopters were training in North Carolina. Within 12 hours of notification, the crews had flown to McGuire AFB, New Jersey, which served as a support hub for rescue efforts at both New York City and the Pentagon. The MH-53Ms flew a Federal Emergency Management Agency search and rescue team to the



MH-53 flying near the World Trade Center site.

Pentagon and transported other civilian agency teams to and around the World Trade Center site.

## Operation ENDURING FREEDOM

In Afghanistan, the ruling Taliban government actively supported Usama Bin Laden and his Al Qaeda terrorist network. President Bush demanded that the Taliban turn over Usama Bin Laden, and when they refused, he ordered U.S. forces to facilitate the overthrow of the Taliban regime and hunt down terrorists in Afghanistan. SOF played the key role in the successful execution of both of these missions.

Before U.S. SOF entered Afghanistan, the only armed opposition to the Taliban was the beleaguered Northern Alliance, which controlled only about 10 percent of Afghanistan. U.S. Air Force and Army SOF aircraft infiltrated Army SF soldiers and Air Force Special Tactics troops into Afghanistan to link up with the Northern Alliance and facilitate the creation of other anti-Taliban forces. This, the largest U.S. Unconventional Warfare (UW) mission since the Vietnam War, was a spectacular success. Less than one month after the first SOF set foot in Afghanistan, Mazar-E-Sharif, Kabul, and most of Northern Afghanistan had been wrested from Taliban control. A month later, the stronghold of Kandahar surrendered to anti-Taliban forces, and virtually the entire population of Afghanistan was liberated from the brutal Taliban regime.

SOF UW operations were the key to the rapid collapse of the Taliban. The UW teams demonstrated the enormous flexibility and effectiveness of SOF. Often flying through bad weather and over and around mountains, Army and Air Force SOF aircraft infiltrated these small teams into dozens of places in Afghanistan where they faced enormous challenges. They were operating in some of the most rugged terrain in the world, frequently having to work their way, in the



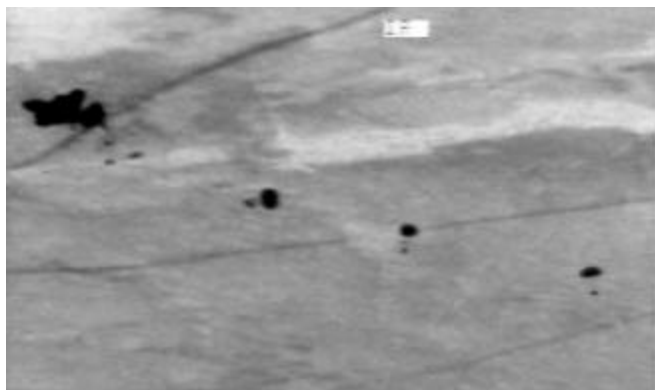
dark, through minefields or along narrow ledges on sheer cliff-faces where one wrong step would mean death.

The friendly Afghan forces were often ill equipped, disorganized, and always heavily outnumbered and outgunned by the Taliban forces. These anti-Taliban forces triumphed because of the assistance provided by U.S. SOF teams. The SOF UW teams directed critical air strikes in support of friendly Afghan forces, including AC-130 fires. The teams directed the aerial resupply of the Afghans by AFSOC aircraft. The SOF UW teams also provided critical training for friendly Afghan forces and assisted with operational planning. The SOF teams did all this with an amazing variety of equipment: everything from donkeys and horses to computers and satellite communications. They integrated tactics as disparate as cavalry charges and laser-guided bombing. And, they did it all in a wide variety of different languages. The success of UW operations in Afghanistan generated a lot of lessons for future operations, but their swift and complete success, with minimal U.S. casualties, also demonstrated the effectiveness of SOF UW and Close Air Support (CAS) training programs.

As friendly Afghan forces liberated their country, SOF were as active in the secure areas as they were on the front lines. The STS personnel quickly switched from directing air strikes to serving as air traffic controllers as airfields at Mazar-E- Sharif, Bagram, and



Kandahar were liberated. Civil Affairs (CA) teams quickly arrived in the liberated areas and began the long process of rebuilding Afghanistan. Even the Army SF teams that



On 19-20 October, Rangers parachute onto an airfield near Kandahar, taking the war to the Taliban.

had been helped mobilize the anti-Taliban forces changed roles and facilitated the demobilization of those same forces when areas became secure.

In addition to the decisive UW operations and the rebuilding of Afghanistan after its liberation, joint and combined SOF also conducted a large number of special reconnaissance (SR) and direct action (DA) missions against the Al Qaeda leadership. These missions were conducted by Army Rangers, Navy SEALs, Army Special Forces, and USAF STS troops as well as coalition SOF. These ground forces were assisted by a variety of fixed and rotary wing aircraft from both Army and Air Force special operations commands. As terrorists began to flee Afghanistan, Navy SEALs conducted maritime interdiction operations (MIO) to close escape routes.

Psychological Operations forces were also very active in Afghanistan, developing information campaign materials. MC-130 aircraft airdropped leaflets as well as small radios so that Afghans could receive the PSYOP broadcasts from USAF Commando Solo aircraft. The PSYOP campaign initially focused on weakening support for the Taliban and Al Qaeda and protecting the Afghan people from bombing runs on military targets, but then gradually shifted to building support for the Interim Afghan Government led by Karzi after the defeat of the Taliban.





Special Forces soldiers conducting UW operations with anti-Taliban forces inside Afghanistan.

On 29 January 2002, President Bush delivered his State of the Union Address. “In four short months,” he affirmed, “our nation has . . . rallied a great coalition, captured, arrested, and rid the world of thousands of terrorists, destroyed Afghanistan’s terrorist training camps, saved a people from starvation, and freed a country from brutal oppression.” Although the Taliban government and Al Qaeda network fell in short order in Afghanistan, the president emphasized that “far from ending there, our war against terror is only beginning.” He mentioned SOF in the Philippines “helping to train that country’s armed forces to go after terrorist cells.” “History has called America and our allies to action,” he opined, “and it is both our responsibility and our privilege to fight freedom’s fight.”

### Operation ENDURING FREEDOM - Philippines

In nations like Yemen and the Philippines, where the governments were anxious to root out terrorists but were unable to do so on their own, U.S. SOF provided critical assistance in the form of Foreign Internal Defense (FID) work. U.S. Army Special Forces, supported by SOF aircraft, took the lead in these FID operations. These FID operations have

focused on training local forces in counter-terrorism tactics, techniques, and procedures. These efforts quietly paid dividends in the form of more effective counter-terrorist operations.

In February 2002, SOF was working in an advisory role with the Filipino military in their battle with the terrorist organization Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG). This terrorist group operated on the island of Basilan, and kidnapped Filipinos and foreigners alike to fund their endeavors. The U.S. role in the Philippines was the second front in the war on terrorism. The SOF mission was to train and upgrade the skills of Filipino troops in antiterrorist operations so that they could take the fight to the Abu Sayyaf guerrillas. As a reminder of the perilous nature of these CT missions, an MH-47 with ten SOF aboard crashed into the Bohol Strait on 21 February 2002. All ten perished.

At the time of publication, the war on terrorism was ongoing, and a third front, in Georgia, was to open soon. U.S. SOF have played a vital role in that war and would continue to do so.

On the 15th Anniversary of the United States Special Operations Command, one can only wonder how prepared our nation would have been to fight this war on terrorism if this command had not been mandated by the Nunn-Cohen Amendment to the Goldwater-Nichols Defense Reorganization Act.



On 17 February 2002, U.S. and Philippine Special Forces board MH-47s for the flight to Basilan Island, a jungle stronghold of the Abu Sayyaf guerrillas.

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